

A History of African Americans in McLean County

PRESENCE, PRIDE & PASSION

**Local History Series
Book III**

Developed from research by John W. Muirhead
Edited by Susan Hartzold and Ruth Cobb

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Acknowledgments

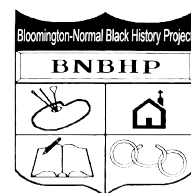
Information for this book was gathered by Pamela B. and John W. Muirhead, guest curators, and staff curator Susan K. Hartzold for the exhibit of the same name with the assistance of the exhibit advisory committee. Utilizing the exhibit text, Ruth Cobb and Susan Hartzold researched, edited and wrote the book's text and created the layout and design. Thanks to Bill Kemp and William LaBounty for their assistance on this project. Special thanks goes to the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project, whose goal for the last 25 years has been to collect and preserve the history of African Americans in our county. We thank them for their generosity and commitment.

PRESENCE, PRIDE & PASSION:

A History of African Americans
In McLean County

Local History Series
Book III

Developed from research by John W. Muirhead
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This book is dedicated to Caribel Washington and Francis Irvin, for their contributions to the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project.



The Bloomington-Normal Black History Project

Before the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project (BNBHP) was organized, little history had been recorded on African Americans in McLean County. Wyatt Wells, just out of high school, was commissioned by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s to write a history on Blacks in this area. In the early 1950s Caribel Washington participated in the development of a local history effort by writing two essays on the history of black churches and their choirs. In the late 1960s a group that included Howard and Elaine Bell and Jo Munro was formed to collect local history. In the early 1980s Dr. Mildred Pratt began sending her Illinois State University Social Work classes out to tape interviews with elderly members of the black community.

After several years it became evident that an organized approach would improve this collection of data and help bring to light the true history of African Americans in McLean County. The Bloomington-Normal Black History Project was launched in 1984. Organizers and participants included Dr. Pratt, Caribel Washington, Stephanie Shaw, Reggie Whittaker, the Bells, Wilbur Barton, Lucinda Posey and Greg Koos. Illinois Wesleyan University and Illinois State University have participated as well. In 1989 the group partnered with the McLean County Historical Society, and the valuable materials gathered through the project became part of the museum's collections.

Over the years project members and friends have continued to donate materials that span the nineteenth century to the present. As a result, the BNBHP collection contains recorded and transcribed interviews, archaeological artifacts, photographs, portraits, booklets, church and club histories and memorabilia, clothing, household items, and research articles all documenting the black experience in McLean County.

Due to the efforts of the BNBHP, the McLean County Museum of History now has an outstanding collection of African American artifacts, primary resources, and oral histories. These materials formed the basis for the exhibit *Presence, Price, & Passion: A History of African Americans in McLean County*, and the accompanying book of the same title.

Note to teachers:

Presence, Pride, & Passion is an ideal companion to a middle and high school social science curriculum, and satisfies the following Illinois Learning Standards as required by the Illinois State Board of Education:

Book text:

English/Language Arts
Science
Social Sciences
Fine Arts

Discussion questions:

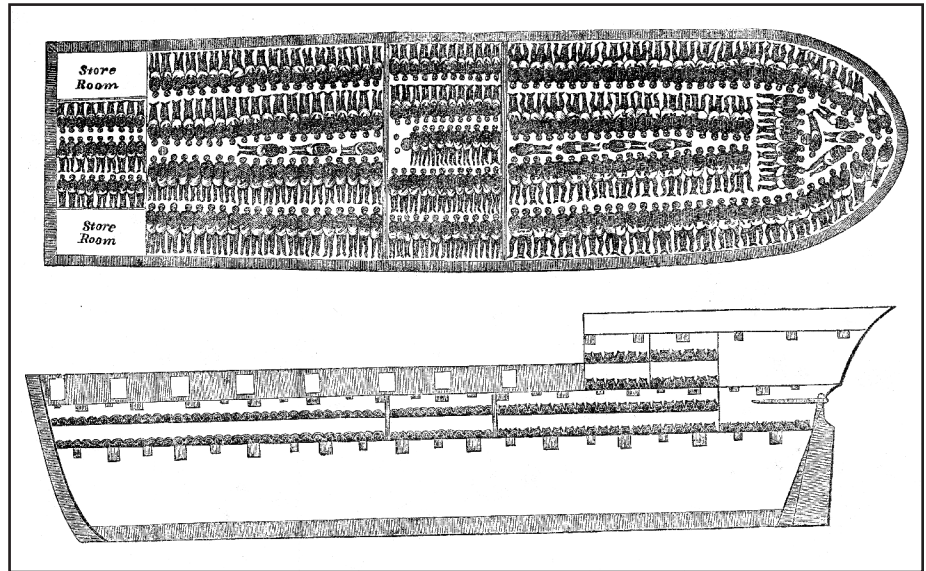
English/Language Arts
Science
Social Science

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INTRODUCTION

The story of the arrival of Africans in North America reflects tragedy and hardship. Ships carried cargos of cotton, tobacco, sugar and molasses from the colonies in North America to their European countries, where the raw materials were processed into manufactured goods. These goods were loaded onto the ships again, this time to be taken as trade items to the nations of Africa, in exchange for precious metals and ivory, and eventually slaves. This human cargo was loaded onto the ships bound for the Americas, where the slaves would be sold to plantation owners who produced cotton, tobacco, sugar and molasses. This **"triangular trade"** made slavery very lucrative for many nations.



Decks of a Slave Ship.
Blake, *The History of Slavery and the Slave Trade*, 1860

As the American colonies grew, slavery also flourished, but became increasingly controversial as the colonies developed into states of a nation. The practice was sanctioned in the U.S. Constitution, which stated that "all other persons" [besides free persons] were to be counted as three-fifths of a whole person. This **three-fifths clause** allowed states in the South to continue enslaving people of color, who were the backbone of the southern agrarian economy.

In the North, however, slavery had been abandoned because hiring and paying workers for manufacturing was more profitable than owning and caring for slaves. This and the growing **abolitionist** sentiment of the North conveyed to Blacks that it was a refuge for escaped slaves and free people of color. In 1787, the Northwest Ordinance prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory, which was later divided into the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois.

When Illinois gained statehood in 1818, it was technically a **"free state,"** meaning that slavery was illegal. There were, however, several loopholes. The French had been the first to settle in Illinois, and their communities were allowed to keep their slaves after statehood. Also, some Americans claimed service from African Americans that seemed very close to slavery under long contracts called **indentures**. Illinois enacted special laws related to Blacks and biracial people. These came to be known as **Black Codes**. These laws were revised and expanded from time to time, though not uniformly enforced. Sometimes outside events brought interest in them to the fore, such as the 1829 law that required all free Blacks to register and pay a \$1,000 bond. The law was enacted to discourage Blacks from immigrating to Illinois and created a very restrictive and uncertain situation for those who did come to Illinois.

So, why would African Americans settle in Illinois? By 1832, Indian populations had been forced west of the Mississippi River by the U.S. government. Therefore, most immigrants felt more comfortable moving to the state. Some Blacks came with their employers -- many of them **Upland Southerners**, who took advantage of the plentiful and cheap land available in Illinois. These free Blacks or manumitted ex-slaves needed the assistance of their employers to receive their **certificates of freedom**, according to the 1829 law. Most Yankee settlers who came to Illinois were anti-slavery. Rich slaveholding landowners were discouraged from buying up big tracts of the best land by legislation that restricted slave ownership. This was a move intended to discourage black immigration, but it also gave Blacks some measure of protection from slave owners trying to claim them as runaway slaves. So, although the Illinois Constitution allowed some slavery, African Americans saw the promise of opportunities and migrated cautiously into Illinois. It was not until the end of the Civil War in 1865 and the passage of the 13th Amendment of the Constitution, which abolished slavery, that large numbers of Blacks began to arrive in Illinois.

As they spread throughout the state, free Blacks, (those with legal proof that they were not slaves) settled in areas that offered the most opportunity and the most acceptance by the white residents. McLean County was one of those locations. By 1880, the majority of Blacks living in Bloomington-Normal had moved northward from Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Missouri and other southern states, or migrated from other Illinois communities.

PRESENCE

Despite Illinois laws that were not friendly to Blacks, African Americans chose to make McLean County their home as early as the 1830s. Some became homeowners and lived in many areas of the community — and never experienced segregation from white neighborhoods. Their homes, like those of other middle-class residents in the county, reflected their culture and their pride in achieving success.

Opportunities for Free Blacks

Free Blacks, such as William Wells and brothers William and George Barton, saw opportunity for a better life in the newly settled area. Wells moved to McLean County in 1841 with his former master, John F. Henry. The Barton brothers and their families were listed in the 1860 census for Bloomington. They came here from Kentucky with their father, William Charles Barton, Sr., who had been freed in 1815 by his master, John Adair.

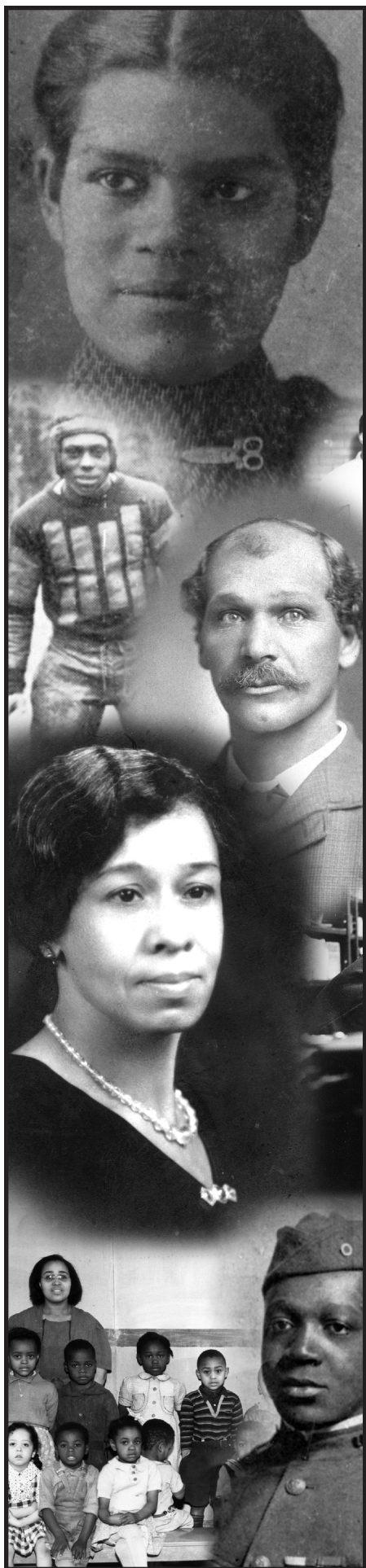
Ex Parte William Wells

This day on behalf of William Wells a negro man named William Wells aged thirty-two years in height about five feet and five inches and weighing about one hundred and fifty-five, being a fine black of good countenance and industrious habits able to gain a sufficient occupation and maintain satisfactory evidence is pronounced by the production of the original deed of Manumission of John Henry on the seventeenth day of March A.D. 1841 and other evidence that he the said William Wells hath been manumitted and set free from slavery and it is agreed that the freedom of said William Wells be certified by the clerk of this court.

All African Americans living in the state of Illinois were required to provide evidence of their freedom in the county where they lived. Such evidence would be recorded in a document such as the one above, a reproduction of William Wells' manumission as recorded in McLean County on March 17, 1841.

Refuge for Escaped Slaves

Other African Americans entered the state under more difficult circumstances. Escaped slaves, looking for a new home or seeking safe passage via the network of hiding places that were part of the **Underground Railroad**, were assisted by anti-slavery minded citizens.



The March 23, 1854 *Weekly Pantagraph* reported an incident in which a Pleasant Hill **abolitionist** group assisted a man and a woman traveling from St. Louis to the North. The headline read:

"SLAVES AIDED IN ESCAPING!"

Abolition groups helped runaway slaves. Mt. Hope, near present day McLean, Illinois, apparently had a group of families that aided runaway slaves. Stories have also been passed down about the **African Methodist Episcopal** (A.M.E.) church offering help. But most slaves avoided Bloomington-Normal because of the large **Upland Southern** population.

Black Codes

Blacks may have been encouraged to immigrate to Illinois because of its status as a **"free state,"** but the **Black Codes** slowed the entry of African Americans into the state in the mid-1800s.

The codes established in 1844 stated that individuals could be jailed or fined for harboring Negroes or mulattos without **certificates of freedom** and bond. Such codes were an attempt to keep Whites from being involved in the Underground Railroad. African Americans entering the state of Illinois were required to have legal proof they were not slaves to avoid arrest and could not move into the area without certificates of freedom.

The codes also required freed slaves to have a sponsor who signed a bond to the county for \$500-\$1000. The bond was to ensure that the *"freed man shall not become a charge of the county."* Certificates of freedom and bonds were recorded by the county clerk. These "manumission" records were referred to when questions arose regarding a Black's status.

ILLINOIS SLAVERY.

THE LAWS NOW IN FORCE, Which oppress and hold in Bondage the COLORED PEOPLE.

Copied from the Revised Statutes adopted and approved in the Session of the General Assembly of Illinois for the years 1844 and '45.

An Act concerning Negroes, Mulattoes, &c.

SECTION 1. No black or mulatto person, shall be permitted to reside in this State, until such person shall produce to the county commissioners' court where he or she is desirous of settling, a certificate of his or her freedom; which certificate shall be duly authenticated in the same manner that is required to be done, in cases arising under the acts and judicial proceedings of other States. And until such person shall have given bond, with sufficient security, to the people of this State, for the use of the proper county, in the penal sum of one thousand dollars, conditioned that such person will not, at any time, become a charge to said county, or any other county of this State, as a poor person, and that such person shall, at all times, demean himself or herself, in strict conformity with the laws of this State, that now are, or hereafter may be enacted; the solvency of said security shall be approved by said clerk. The clerk shall file said bond, and if said bond shall in any condition thereof be broken, the whole penalty shall become forfeited, and the clerk, on being informed thereof, shall cause the said bond to be prosecuted to effect. And it shall be the duty of such clerk to make an entry of the certificate so produced and indorse a certificate on the original certificate, stating the time the said bond was approved and filed; and the name and description of the person producing the same; after which it shall be lawful for such free negro or mulatto to reside in this State.

SEC. 2. If any person shall harbor such negro or mulatto as aforesaid, not having such certificate, and given bond, and taken a certificate thereof, or shall here, or in anywise give sustenance to such negro or mulatto, not having such certificate of freedom, and of having given bond, shall be fined in the sum of FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS, one-half thereof to the use of the county, and the other half to the party giving information thereof: *Provided*, This section shall not affect any negro or mulatto who is now a resident of this State.

SEC. 3. It shall be the duty of all free negroes and mulattoes who shall come to reside in this State, having a family of his or her own, and

having a certificate as mentioned in the first section of this chapter, to give to the clerk of the county commissioners' court, at the time of making an entry of his certificate, a description, with the name and ages of his, her or their family, which shall be stated by the clerk in the entry made by him of such certificate; and the clerk shall also state the same on the original certificate: *Provided, however*, That nothing contained in this or the preceding section of this chapter, shall be construed to prevent the overseers of the poor in any township from causing any such free negro or mulatto to be removed, who shall come into this State contrary to the provisions of the laws concerning the poor.

SEC. 4. Every black or mulatto person (slaves and persons held to service excepted) residing in this State, shall enter his or her name, (unless they have heretofore entered the same,) together with the name or names of his or her family, with the clerk of the county commissioners' court of the county in which they reside, together with the evidence of his or her freedom; which shall be entered on record by the said clerk, together with a description of all such persons; and thereafter the clerk's certificate of such record shall be sufficient evidence of his or her freedom: *Provided*, That nothing in this chapter contained, shall be construed to bar the lawful claim of any person or persons to any such negro or mulatto.

SEC. 5. Every black or mulatto person who shall be found in this State, and not having such a certificate as is required by this chapter, shall be deemed a runaway slave or servant, and it shall be lawful for any inhabitant of this State, to take such black or mulatto person before some justice of the peace, and should such black or mulatto person not produce such certificate as aforesaid, it shall be the duty of such justice to cause such black or mulatto person to be committed to the custody of the sheriff of the county, who shall keep such black or mulatto person, and in three days after receiving him, shall advertise him, at the court house door, and shall transmit a notice, and cause the same to be advertised for six weeks in some public newspaper printed nearest to the place of apprehending such black

Abolitionists published the Black Codes approved by Illinois legislators to inform residents of their oppressive nature.

This day William T. Major presents a bond of one thousand dollars, payable to T. B. Hoblit, Seth Baker and Andrew McMillin, County Commissioners, and their successors in office, conditioned that a negro girl named Rosanna Johnson, late a slave in the state of Kentucky, shall not become a charge on any county in this state, &c. The court accepts of the said bond and orders the same to be put on file for the benefit of the said counties and also for the said Rosanna.

McLean County Commissioner's Court, June Term 1835

McLean County Court record of bond for Rosanna Johnson

Commonwealth of Kentucky Set
 At a court held for Fleming County, on the 26th day of March 1860
 Tabitha Fulton, a girl of colour, appeared in court, & it was proved
 by the oaths of John W. Kulin, & Celia Coons, that she is the daughter
 of Margant Fulton, a free woman of colour, whose papers have been
 proven in court. Said Tabitha Fulton was born free: and is de-
 scribed on the Records as being born on the 18th day of June
 1846, about 5 feet high, light mulatta, freckled face, blue
 eyes, auburn hair, nearly straight, Roman nose, & spare make.
 In witness Whereof I have hereunto set
 my hand & the Seal of the Fleming
 County Court this 26th day of
 March 1860.
 W. J. Dudley clerk
 of the Fleming County Court



Tabitha Fulton's certificate of freedom

Ex Parte Henry Wells
 This day on behalf of Henry Wells a negro man
 of the Age of thirty four years in height five feet and three inches and
 three fourth of an inch having a scar from a kick on the right cheek
 of a very dark colour and stout built habit, steady and of cheerful
 countenance - satisfactory Evidence is produced by the Production
 of the Original deed of Manumission of John F. Henry of date
 the Seventeenth day of March A D 1841 And other Evidence that
 he the said Henry Wells hath been Manumitted and is free from
 Slavery, And it is ordered that the freedom of said Henry Wells be
 Certified by the Clerk of this Court
 State of Missouri }
 de Leon County }
 I attest I Clerk of the Circuit Court held in
 And for the said County hereby certify to all whom it may concern that it
 appears by the Records of the said Court

The manumission record of Henry Wells was recorded in the McLean County Court ledger of 1841.
 Courtesy McLean County Circuit Court

Mementos of the Past

The **Emancipation Proclamation** and the end of the Civil War brought about mass migrations from the South to many northern cities. The newcomers brought along family mementos to help sustain memories of those left behind. Lue Anna Brown was born in Kentucky. When she moved to Olmsted, Illinois about 1904 to live with her sister's family, she brought along a quilt made by her mother. She moved to Bloomington around 1915 to work in domestic service. The treasured quilt survived every move.

Family heirlooms often traveled across many miles and several generations. A gathering basket illustrates the complexity of the African American Diaspora. Edmonia Wilson brought it from Brownsville, Tennessee, to Decatur, Illinois, when her husband came to work at the Wanter Maleable Iron Factory during World War I. She passed the basket to her daughter, Elnora Wilson Hill, who gave it to her daughter, Luvada Hunter. After she married, Mrs. Hunter moved to Bloomington in the 1920s, and brought the basket with her.

Gathering basket, c. 1885
Donated by Luvada
Hunter
903.2069



Migration from the South

Some families lived for a time in southern Illinois towns or rural areas before moving to Bloomington-Normal. The Barton family moved from Kentucky to Alton, Illinois before settling in Normal in the 1870s. The Bell family was just traveling through McLean County, but remained after finding favorable employment.



Quilt made by Laura Brown, c. 1880
Donated by Lue Anna Brown Sanders Clark
904.4692

My grandfather, William Bell, came here right after the Civil War. He was really on his way to Chicago. He was a construction worker, but work was good here in Bloomington so he stopped here. And my family had been here ever since then.

Howard Bell

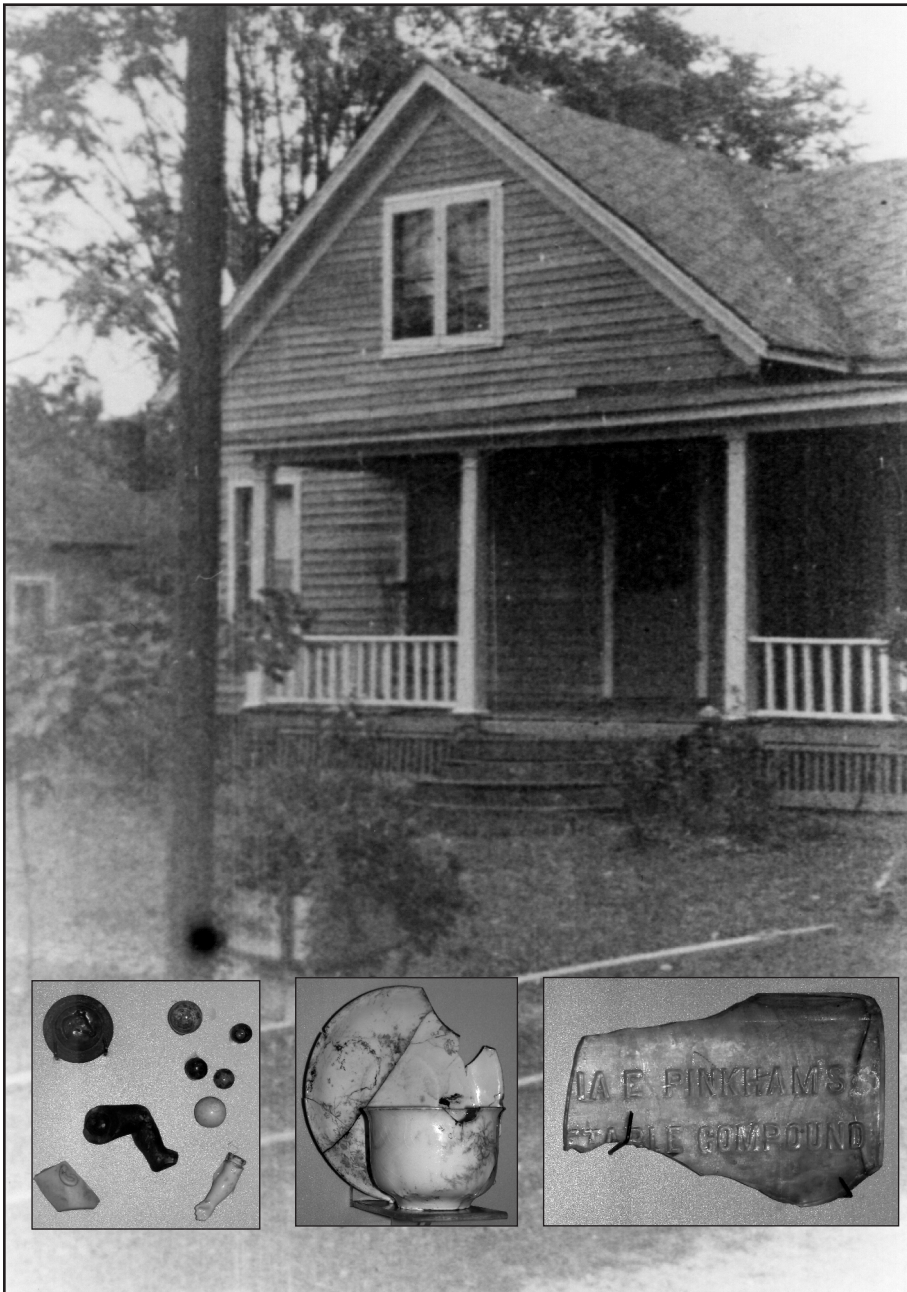
Harriet Fyffe Richardson wrote about how her grandfather, Jesse Fell, helped these former slaves and their families in her book *Quaker Pioneers*.

Peter Duff was another who on reaching Normal sought food and work at Grandfather's door. Somewhat later his brothers, Robert and Johnny, followed him to Normal and they too became attached to the Fells.

Harriet Fyffe Richardson, Quaker Pioneers

Home Life

African Americans, like any Americans, furnished their homes in a manner that reflected their lifestyles and backgrounds. Compared to families in other communities, some Blacks in Bloomington-Normal enjoyed a relatively middle-class status. A variety of everyday items can tell many stories about how black residents lived and played in McLean County.



The Barton home in Normal, and toys, china and medicine bottle uncovered during an archeological excavation at the home.

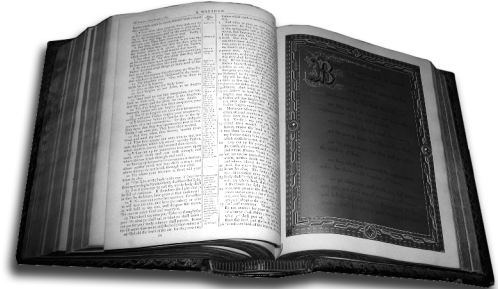
1870-1899

Some African-American families bought homes for the first time in this era. China, furniture, glassware and an abundance of housekeeping implements proclaimed their status as members of genteel black society.

The Malone, Barton, and Duff families of Normal were among the earliest black homeowners. The Barton family purchased a home in Normal in 1896. It stayed in the family for over 100 years. An archaeological dig conducted at the Barton home revealed much about the material culture of area Blacks.

Artifacts uncovered at the Barton site provided data about the daily life and sustenance of the Barton family. Fragments of toys and games indicate the Barton children enjoyed "store bought" toys. Excavators found peach pits, sealing lids, and canning jars, indicating the use of home canning techniques, and ceramic dishes used to serve family meals. Medicine bottles suggest the family sometimes purchased "cures" instead of making expensive visits to a doctor. The Barton family kept pigs in their backyard, and several pig bones were found with saw marks made during butchering.

Religion played a key role in many African American families, so items used in worship in their homes offer a glimpse of their daily expressions of faith. In the 1880s, the Harber family bible was used for prayer every night.



Harber family bible

1900-1929

At the turn of the twentieth century, African American celebrations of their own culture and its heroes were reflected in many of their personal belongings. McLean County black citizens often hung portraits of such nationally recognized African Americans as **Frederick Douglass** and **Paul Laurence Dunbar** in their homes. Books and furniture were also important status markers for middle-class black families.



Frederick Douglass and Paul Laurence Dunbar memorial print, c. 1910
From the Estate of Kathryn Dean

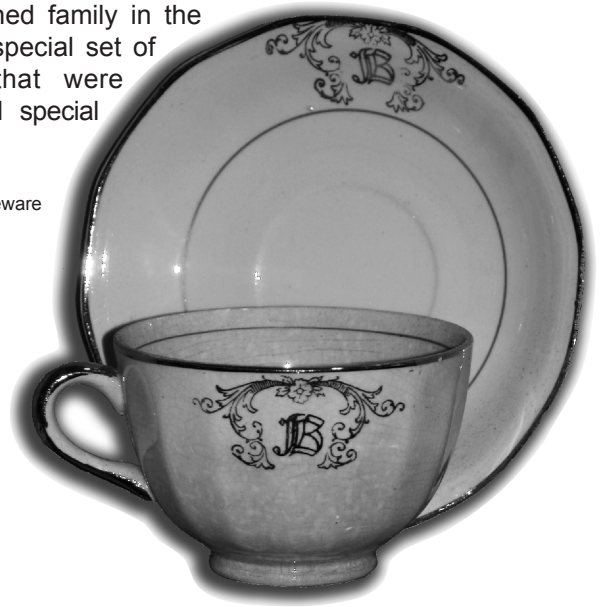
1930-1959

Most African American families suffered during the Great Depression. Eventually employment options expanded and their financial circumstances improved. More Blacks attained a middle-class lifestyle, which included nice furniture, "good dishes," and travel for pleasure.

William "Curly" Schield died in 1929. His Spanish-American War veteran's pension and his wife Mae's resourcefulness kept the family going during the Great Depression. During the hard times, many people lost everything they had, so their heirloom formal chairs were a source of pride in the Schield home.

The Bells, an established family in the community, purchased a special set of monogrammed dishes that were reserved for holidays and special events.

Bell family teacup and plate from tableware set, c. 1930
Donated by Howard and Elaine Bell
2000.72



Julia Duff traveled across the United States and brought home souvenirs from the places she visited.

Merritt Island Potters redware plate, c. 1950
Donated by the Estate of Julia Duff
863.1534



Schild family chair
Courtesy Caribel Washington



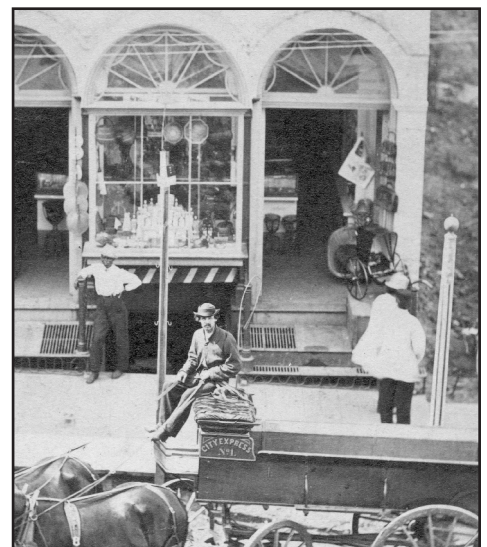
PRIDE

Local African Americans achieved their goals by virtue of strong entrepreneurial spirit and the pursuit of dignified employment. They actively participated in the community through politics, church involvement, and in service to others through agencies and military service. African Americans were justifiably proud of their organizations, which provided social and athletic outlets.

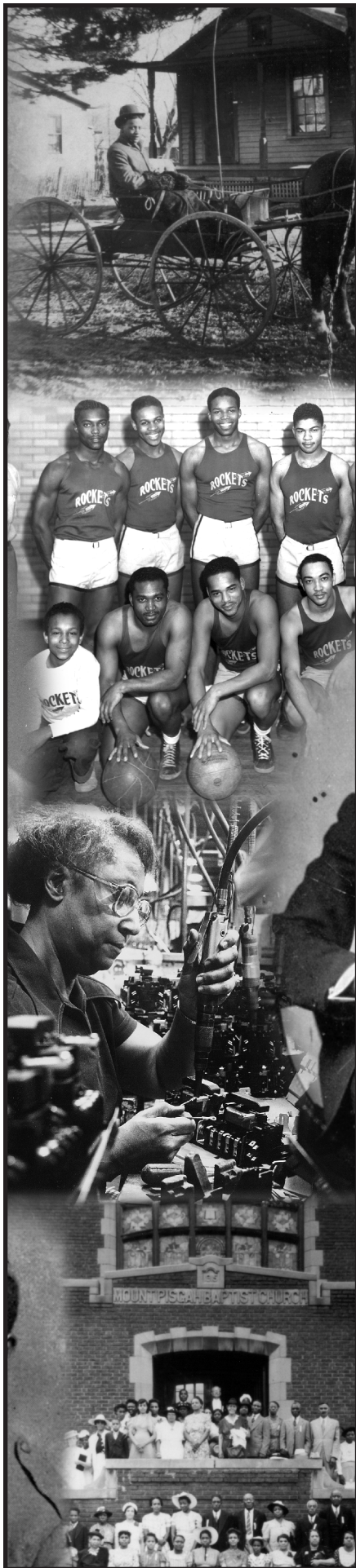
An Entrepreneurial Spirit

Limited opportunities for advancement in white-owned businesses and a drive for independence prompted local Blacks to start and maintain their own businesses. Black **entrepreneurs** started barber shops and laundries, manufacturing businesses, restaurants, professional services and farms, though Black Codes prevented them from owning land prior to the Civil War.

After the Civil War, black barbers cut hair in LeRoy, Lexington, Heyworth, Chenoa, Bellflower, El Paso, Normal, and Bloomington. They served both black and white patrons, though in separate shops. The 1875 *Bloomington City Directory* listed six African American barbers, including Civil War veterans Richard Blue, Isaac Esque, William McCoslin and Robert Allen. Louisa and Jennie Esque were hairdressers and sold wigs in Bloomington. In the twentieth century, numerous barbers opened successful shops. Frank



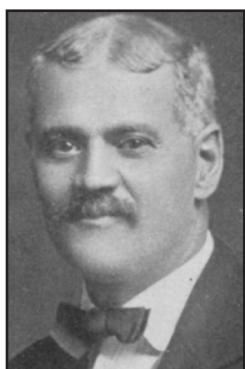
An unidentified black barber stands outside his basement shop at 112-114 West Front Street in Bloomington around 1860.



MISS LOUISA ESQUE,
 Manufacturer of the Improved
Invisible or Ventilating Wigs and Toupees,
LADIES' ORNAMENTAL HAIR WORK, ETC.,
AND LADIES' HAIR DRESSER,
 106 North Main St., 2 Doors from McLean Co. Bank,
BLOOMINGTON, ILL.
 Highest Price Paid for Raw Hair. The trade supplied as usual. Ladies' and Childrens' Hair
 Cut on Short Notice.

City Directory advertisement for the products and services of Miss Louisa and Miss Jennie Esque

Dabney had a barbershop on Beaufort Street in Normal from the late 1800s until 1956. This successful business served white customers only. Local barbershops remained **segregated** until the late 1950s.

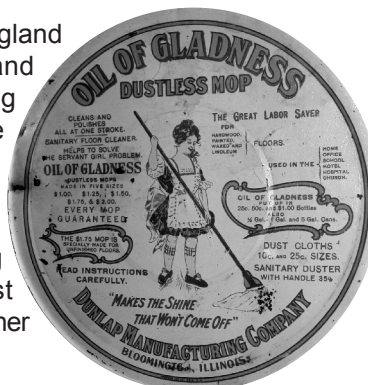


George Hoagland

Cleaning, pressing, and repairing clothes were also good business options for Blacks. Boone Meaderds and his sons Lafayette and Booker operated People's Cleaners during the 1920s and earned a good middle-class income.

Ex-slave George Hoagland combined cleaning and manufacturing, by using his janitorial experience as a springboard for a successful business.

Hoagland sold his "Oil of Gladness" cleaning supplies nationally. His factory on West Washington Street offered employment to other African Americans in the area.



Hoagland's Oil of Gladness, c. 1912
 Donated by David Miller
 858.519

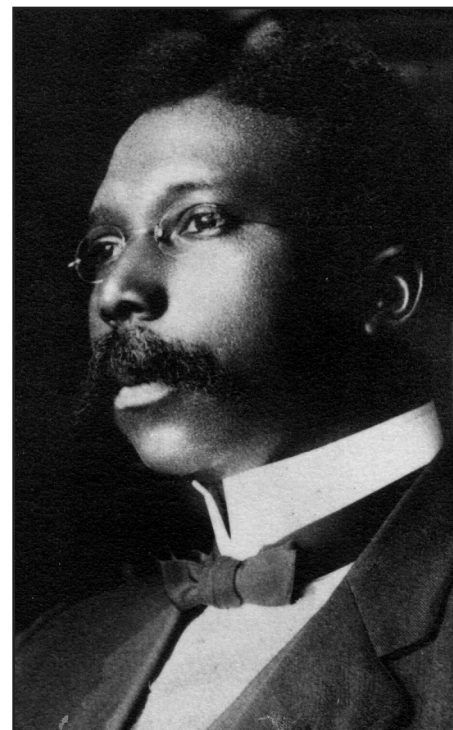


Isaac and Lue Anna Sanders' Workingmen's Club

house and pool hall that served local miners and railroad workers. Located at 1101 West Washington Street, the Workingmen's Club operated until 1919, when Prohibition forced closure.

Dr. Eugene Covington was the only black medical professional to successfully practice in McLean County until the late twentieth century. Covington had an office at 313 North Main Street in Bloomington, where he served patients of both races until his death in 1929. He earned his medical degree from Howard

University, and was invited to become a member of the McLean County Medical Association shortly after establishing his practice in 1900.



Dr. Eugene Covington

Some Blacks found work as farm hands and tenant farmers. For most, emancipation and the elimination of Black Codes came too late for them to purchase their own farmland. Jesse and Mary Ward arrived in the Bellflower area in the late 1870s, where they rented and farmed as many as 1,600 acres of land.



The Ward family of Bellflower

William Field is the only recorded black farmer/landowner in nineteenth century McLean County. He owned a farm north of Normal valued at \$8,000 in the 1870s. Records indicate that Field was free in 1850, and lived in Kentucky, where he had holdings valued at \$2,000.

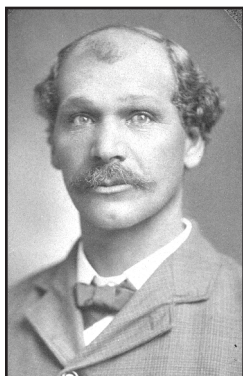
African American children also gained valuable experience in the world of business.

Teenagers Dorothy and Wilbur Barton sold vegetables from their family's eleven-acre farm. They traveled up and down Broadway Street in Normal, selling their goods out of a low-bed wagon pulled by their horse.

Cylinder scale used by Dorothy and Wilbur Barton, c. 1922
Donated by Wilbur Barton
94.5.409.2



Racial identity, rather than the level of education, training or skill, was usually the deciding factor for job prospects. While several were business owners, Blacks rarely found jobs as professionals; instead they frequently worked as domestic servants or general laborers.



Peter Duff

Peter Duff came to Normal as a youth in the mid-1800s and got his start working for Jesse Fell. He was a successful carpenter and worked for the Chicago & Alton Railroad

and on the Bloomington Reservoir project. His daughter, Alverta Duff, was a housekeeper for the Lewis Stevenson family from the 1910s until the 1960s. His nephew, John Duff, worked for the Stevenson family during the 1930s as a chauffeur, a prestigious job for many black men.



Alverta Duff



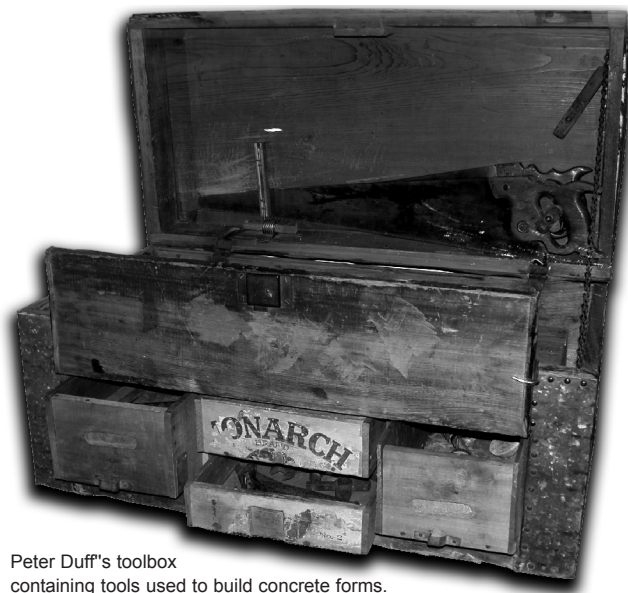
John Duff and the car in which he chauffeured the Stevensons.



The railroad was a major employer in the area, but Blacks typically worked for the company in semi-skilled jobs. William Shavers was hired to walk along the Chicago & Alton Railroad tracks looking for malfunctioning switches or broken rails.

Railroad lantern used by William Shavers, c. 1935
Donated by Delores Shavers
928.1004

Through favorable circumstances, hard work and exceptional competence, a few Blacks gained employment in higher-status jobs. World War I veteran Willis Stearles began working at Miller Park Zoo as an animal feeder in the 1920s. By the time he retired in the 1950s, he had achieved the position of zoo superintendent.



Peter Duff's toolbox containing tools used to build concrete forms.
Donated by Reginald Whittaker
905.487-505



Willis Stearles feeds the reindeer at Miller Park

Lucinda Brent worked for nine years as secretary at the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's School in Normal. In 1943, she became the medical records librarian at Brokaw Hospital where she was employed for twenty-six years.



Lucinda Brent Posey

Community Participation

African Americans have helped improve their quality of life by participating in community affairs. From the nineteenth century through the 1950s, few social service agencies served black families, so the community met its own needs through its churches and individual efforts. Cedonia and Alex Barker began taking orphaned and needy children into their home at 1203 West Moulton Street in Bloomington around 1920. By the time it was renamed the Booker T. Washington Home in 1935, it was governed by a board of civic-minded white women. Managers of the home were typically selected from the black community. Napoleon and Louise Calimese moved into the home around 1927 and managed it until it closed in the 1960s. Area residents supported this home through Bloomington's Community Chest/United Welfare campaign.



Napoleon and Louise Calimese with their wards at the Booker T. Washington Home.

In the early 1940s, Caribel Washington, Walter and Helen Gaines, William and Ethel Tripp Sr., and N.J. and A.J. Henderson were among the organizers

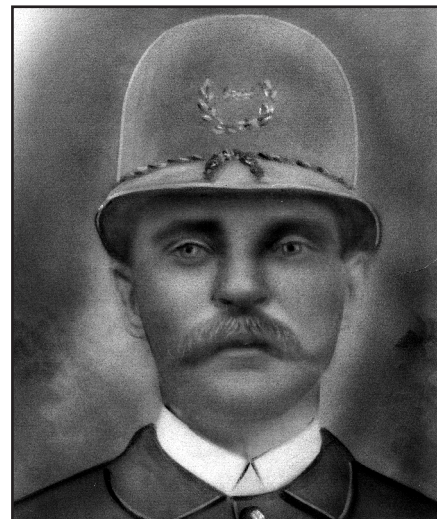


Leaders of the Twin City Recreation Center meet with city officials on the porch of their new location, the Scott House.

of a recreation center for young black people. The original location was above the Bloomington Radiator and Body Works at Front and Madison streets. Two moves later, the Twin City Recreation Center settled at the large Scott Home on South Main Street in Bloomington. The center was a gathering place where teens could dance and socialize in a chaperoned setting. It closed in 1963.

Blacks in Government

African Americans actively sought local elected positions and political appointments. Though their chances for success were slim, some attained their goals. In 1885, Hezekiah Towles became Bloomington's first appointed black patrolman. Jacob Dean began his career as a patrolman in 1898.



Jacob Dean crayon portrait, c. 1905
Donated by Kathryn Dean
2000.2.15

In 1971, Eva Jones became the first African American elected to a significant political office in Bloomington. She was the leading vote getter in the race for three open school board seats in District 87. Jones served a term as school board president and went on to win election to the Bloomington City Council in the spring of 1979.



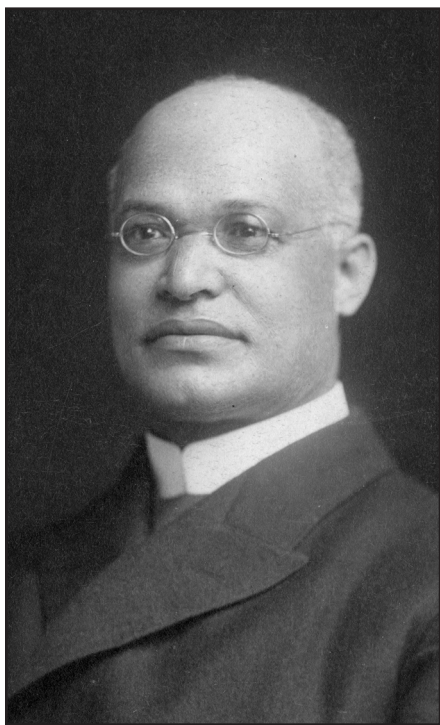
Eva Jones

The Church Community

McLean County African Americans strengthened their community and themselves soon after arriving through their church involvement. Reverend Paul Quinn, the circuit-riding minister who established many churches in the "West," began meeting with Bloomington's black community in 1843. The Wayman **African Methodist Episcopal** (A.M.E.) Church was established around 1846. The church building, on North Center Street, was finished in 1859 and enlarged in 1871.



Wayman A.M.E. Church



Charles Spencer Smith

Entered at the Post Office in Bloomington, Illinois, as second class mail matter.

The Jubilee Gem.

Vol. 2. No. 3.

JUNE, 1885.

Published Quarterly.

AN EXERCISE FOR

CHILDREN'S DAY

FOR USE IN THE

Sunday Schools of the A. M. E. Church.

First Part—At the usual hour for morning service, a sermon by the pastor. Subject, "The Duty of Parents to Children." Text, Ephesians 4:6.

Second Part—2:30 p. m., the Children's Jubilee, with the following as the order of exercises:

1. Singing. No. 1 Anniversary Hymn.
2. Prayer.
3. Singing. Selection by the school.
4. Responsive reading, Psalm 145:1-9.

Pastor. I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name forever and ever.

School. Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name forever and ever.

Pastor. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.

School. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts.

Pastor. I will speak of the glorious honor of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works.

School. And men shall speak of the might of Thy terrible acts; and I will declare Thy greatness.

Pastor. They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness.

School. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

All. The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works.

5. Repetition of the Apostles' Creed.
6. Singing. No. 2.
7. Introductory remarks by the superintendent. Time, five minutes.
8. Essay. Subject, "Duty of Parents to Children." Time, ten minutes.
9. Singing. Selection by the school.
10. Discussion. Subject, "Shall Lesson Leaves Take the Place of the Bible in the Sunday-school?" Two speakers; five minutes each.
11. Singing. No. 3, "In the blessed Bible."
12. Essay. Subject, "Missionary Work Among Children; How best Conducted." Time, ten minutes.
13. Singing. No. 4, "Revive us."
14. Discussion. Subject, "Can we Teach Children the Doctrines of the Church Without the Use of the Catechism?" Two speakers; five minutes each.
15. Singing. Selection by the school.
16. Essay. Subject, "The Need of Faithful Teachers." Time, ten minutes.
17. Singing. No. 5, "Put on the Christian armor."
18. Closing address by the pastor, or some one appointed.
19. Collection for the benefit of the Sunday-School Union.
20. Singing. No. 6, "Farewell"

SUGGESTIONS.

1. Strive to make the day a grand success.
2. Select suitable persons to carry out the literary part of the programme.
3. Let each school endeavor to raise 5 cents for every person present.
4. Seek to get every other person to do the same.
5. Let the school be prompt in meeting, and stick to the programme.
6. Decorate with flowers, banners and mottoes.
7. Let the money collected be forwarded at once to the Corresponding Secretary, Rev. C. S. Smith, Bloomington, Ill., who will receipt for the same, and publish the entire list in the Annual Record.
8. In no case is the money to be retained and reported to the Annual Conference, neither is it to be reported as "Missionary money."
9. It should be remembered that we are not responsible for Children's Day money taken to the Annual Conference, and when it is we very seldom get it. Please bear this in mind, and send the money direct to us as the General Conference ordered.
10. In order that we may be able to make up the full report as soon as possible, we urge that the collection be forwarded to us immediately.

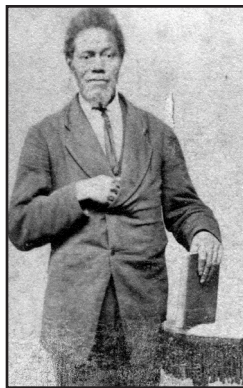
Arranged by REV. C. S. SMITH,

Cor. Sec'y of the Connectional Sunday-School Union of the A. M. E. Church.

The Reverend Charles Spencer Smith began publishing *The Jubilee Gem* from Bloomington, Illinois in the 1880s. The paper served A.M.E. Churches across the nation and is still published in Nashville, Tennessee.



Union Mission Church Sunday School room



Reverend Thomas Reasoner

Trustees of the Union Mission Church purchased a home in 1885 for their Union Sunday School. The church used the building at 302 North Fell Avenue in Normal for twenty years to teach its mission.

The Reverend Thomas Reasoner was a key organizer of the South Hill Baptist Church in 1865. By 1892, it was known as the Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church. Mt. Pisgah's Reverend Ernest Hall was an important Baptist leader and presided over the state Baptist convention in Quincy in 1909.

Reverend Ernest Hall



Members of Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church in 1940

Honor to Country

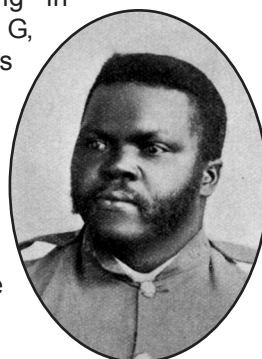
Despite limited freedoms, black citizens showed their patriotism and brought honor to themselves by serving in our nation's military. When President Lincoln allowed Blacks to join the ranks of the Union Army during the Civil War, local men were quick to respond.

Mr. Editor: Thank God! The time has at last come for colored men to show of what kind of stuff they are made, by an opportunity being given for them to enlist. The credit I am sorry to say is not yet to Illinois, but to Massachusetts, but it matters not where the place, so the opportunity is given."

*Carter Ferguson,
Weekly Pantagraph,
May 21, 1863*

Four days after penning this letter, Carter Ferguson was one of twenty local men who took advantage of Lincoln's belated acceptance of black troops. They eagerly boarded trains to Boston, where they joined the fight against slavery as part of the 55th Massachusetts Infantry. Other local volunteers, including Richard Blue, Richard Stewart, John Williams, Wade H. May, Oscar McClellan, James Scott, James Anderson, James Valentine, Lewis Johnson, and Frank Wheeler, joined the 29th U.S. Colored Infantry.

During the Spanish-American War, McLean County's Company G, of the 8th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, was composed entirely of African American citizens. Members of Company G signed up in 1899 to fight the Spanish-American War in Cuba. Serving in Company G, Captain Julius Witherspoon was the area's first African American to be commissioned as an officer in the U.S. military.



Captain Julius Witherspoon



Company G of the 8th Illinois Volunteer Infantry



The funeral procession of Gus Williams

During World War I, over 35 local men of color fought bravely in France as members of Company K, 370th Volunteer Infantry. Marco Shavers, Howard Brent, Donald Hunter and Harry L. Pierson all received Distinguished Service Medals for their actions in Europe during World War I. Alonzo Walton, also of the 370th, received a citation for bravery.

Gus Williams was the only local member killed in action. He received full military honors at his funeral. The Redd-Williams American Legion Post was named to honor him and John Redd, who died from wounds received in battle.

In World War II, Blacks experienced segregation and **discrimination**, but still participated on all fronts of the war. Sergeant Virgil Dean served in the United States Army during World War II. He fought in Normandy, Northern France and Ardennes, earning three Bronze Stars.

Social Life and Organizations

The limitation of twentieth-century cultural and political boundaries spurred black residents to create alternative outlets for social interaction. They organized dances and athletic teams because segregation kept them from attending "public" events.

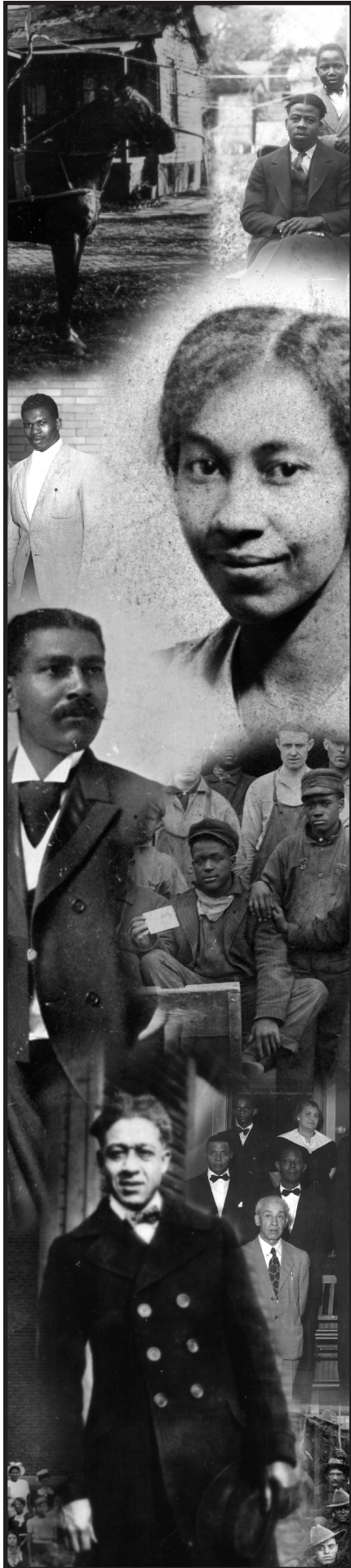


Black students could not attend ISNU's Homecoming dances, so the students planned this separate event in 1932.

Black athletes started their own all-black teams as early as the 1870s. Semi-professional baseball teams, such as the Colored Giants, drew large local crowds. All-black men's and women's basketball teams competed against both black and white teams. The Twin Cities Recreation Center sponsored the Rockets, a basketball team managed by Willie Tripp and Reginald Whittaker.



The Colored Giants



PASSION For Civil Rights

Since their arrival in McLean County, African Americans have worked to earn the rights and opportunities promised to all citizens. In some eras, the process has been more difficult than others.

Abolition and Free Citizenship

Prior to the Civil War, Blacks and many Whites did what they could to improve conditions for people of color. Some owners freed their slaves and supported them as missionaries in West Africa.

Baba Leone Western Africa.
Sept. 1850

Dear Sir. We have all landed on the shores of Africa. & got into our houses. we have been here 3 weeks. So far I am well pleased ~~so far~~ to my master in Illinois. Remember me affectionately tell him that none of us have been taken with the fever yet. we have a prospect of war with the natives. I hope it will be settled without bloodshed. To Joseph Major & his family I want my love & compliments. It rains here almost every day more or less. when the rain is over we can out to our garden as the soil is sandy. we have not got our farms laid out yet. each of us will get 40 acres. which will be ours when we clear 2 for every 10 - that is 8 acres. we have a Sunday school here 3 missionary white men 2 baptist & a Methodist. as it respects living here it is altogether different to that in America here we have Palm oil & rice. sweet potatoes plantains. & Bananas.

SELF-MADE MEN, BY A SELF-MADE MAN!

FRED. DOUGLASS,

THE CELEBRATED COLORED ORATOR,

Will give the last lecture of the Bloomington Library course,

On Wednesday Ev'g, March 4th, 1868,

—IN—

Schroder's Opera House!

THE SUBJECT IS:

"SELF-MADE MEN."

And this lecture is by all acknowledged to be the best effort of Mr. Douglass' mature life.

It is hoped that every one will come out and hear this great man, and learn from him of what elements great men are made, and what constitutes a self-made man. After a long life of slavery and an equally long life of freedom and self-education, Mr. Douglass is probably better enabled to discuss this matter than any man in the country.

Who does not want to hear through what trials and great tribulations this eloquent gentleman has come up until he has finally reached his present proud eminence?

EVERY YOUNG PERSON,

But especially every one who has to be the architect of his own fortunes

SHOULD HEAR THIS LECTURE,

To such it will be more valuable than gold.

Those who heard Mr. Greeley speak on this subject should now hear Mr. Douglass, and be thereby better enabled to judge of the merits of the lecturers. We are told that this lecture is full of life and pathos and real eloquence, and that

It is not simply a Dry, Long-Winded Dissertation, gotten up to make money out of,

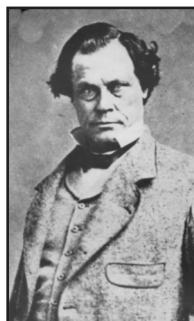
But that it is the best effort of an ever eloquent writer and speaker.

Lecture begins at 8 o'clock P. M.

Promotional flyer for the 1868 Frederick Douglass program presented by the Women's Library Association
Courtesy Bloomington Public Library

Area residents invited prominent individuals to the community to speak against slavery. Former slave Frederick Douglass was a guest speaker in Bloomington on several occasions. The lectures were organized by the Women's Library Association both during and after the war. **Owen Lovejoy**, a nationally renowned abolitionist, member of Congress and friend of Jesse Fell, was a frequent and persuasive antislavery speaker in McLean County.

Black residents of Bloomington participated in State Colored Conventions to address the issues of Black Codes, as well as education, economics and colonization. Samuel Witherspoon, Richmond Holly, the Reverend Philip Ward, William Barton, Gus Hill and the Reverend C. S. Jacobs were among the participants in State Colored Conventions held in Chicago in 1853, Alton in 1856 and Galesburg in 1866.



Owen Lovejoy

DELEGATES ELECTED

Thursday night there was a meeting of the colored citizens of Bloomington. Moses Chapin was elected President, and Richard Blue, Secretary. P. H. Ward was appointed a delegate to the Colored Convention which will meet at Galesburg on the 16th of October. Resolutions were adopted calling on this convention to send representatives to our State Legislature to demand equal right for the blacks of this State.

Weekly Pantagraph,
September 24, 1866

Education

Following the Civil War, African Americans began to achieve progress in education. Local citizens supported equal rights by voicing opinions in favor of school **integration**. Jesse Fell was among those who argued for the integration of Normal's Model School in 1867; the town of Normal voted by a wide margin to integrate.

I should enter my protest in the strongest possible terms against the crying injustice of excluding from our Public Schools any child of the district, no matter what the color of his or her skin. Indeed, I feel deeply mortified, as a citizen of Normal - a town distinguished no less for its schools than for its devotion to human rights - that the exigency should have arisen requiring such a protest.

Jesse Fell, Daily Pantagraph,
April 26, 1867

Black citizens made slow advances with issues of school segregation. Bloomington public schools were established in 1857, but excluded black students. A separate school for black children opened in 1860. School No. 5 was located at



Students whose families had moved to Fairbury from the Sullivan Farm in Ford County attended integrated Fairbury schools.

Roosevelt and Walnut streets. In 1871, Henry Crow petitioned the Board of Education to admit his children to a white school that was closer to his home than No. 5. The minutes of Bloomington's School Board meeting indicate that Henry Crow's petition was unanimously rejected.

In 1872, a lawsuit was brought against the Danvers school when officials decided to construct a separate facility for four black students rather than allow them to sit in the same classroom with white students. When the case, *Chase vs. Stephenson*, came to court, Judge Thomas Tipton disallowed the use of taxpayer funds to build separate facilities, stating that the children could be accommodated in the existing school building. The case was appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court in 1874 and upheld on the basis of economics — to save taxpayer's money.

Illinois amended its school laws in 1874, making it illegal to exclude directly or indirectly any child from school on account of his or her color. By then, Bloomington had **desegregated** its schools.

The Right to Vote and Equal Access

With the 1870 passage of the 15th amendment and the support of most locals, Blacks began to vote. Samuel Witherspoon was the first African American to vote in a Bloomington election in April of 1879. Blacks also voted that year in Normal, Lexington, and Clinton.

Maintaining their political voice took diligence. The Reverend Charles Spencer Smith, minister of Bloomington's African Methodist Episcopal church in the 1880s, was a prominent national political activist. As the Illinois leader to the National

Colored Convention in 1884, Smith argued that black people were being taken for granted by the Republican Party.

THE RUBICON IS PASSED

The colored troops fought nobly, and they voted nobly, too, on yesterday. We do not know the exact number who exercised the citizens' privilege in the city. One hard-shelled old gentleman, who visited the polls and saw his African brethren voting without hindrance, refrained from voting, and in despair wandered into a lawyer's office. Here he confidentially whispered, "Why, the niggers are voting over there." "Well," was the reply, "Isn't that all right?" "Perhaps so," said he, "but I shall never never vote again."

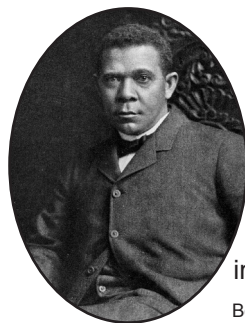
Weekly Pantagraph, April 7, 1870

Jim Crow Segregation

In nineteenth century McLean County, Blacks were provided with equal access to public facilities and accommodations. The spread of segregation in the early twentieth century led to the adoption of many of the conventions of "**Jim Crow**" segregation in Bloomington-Normal. Blacks were increasingly treated as second-class citizens.



When the Fisk Jubilee Singers performed a benefit concert for Illinois Wesleyan University in 1880, they stayed in Bloomington's finest hotel, the Ashley House. Twenty-five years later no hotel in Bloomington would house a Black.



Booker T. Washington's acceptance of social separation matched local conditions at the time. Washington spoke to various civic, educational and church groups in Bloomington-Normal on two occasions in 1915, promoting the idea that black economic development was more important than racial integration and political power.

Booker T. Washington

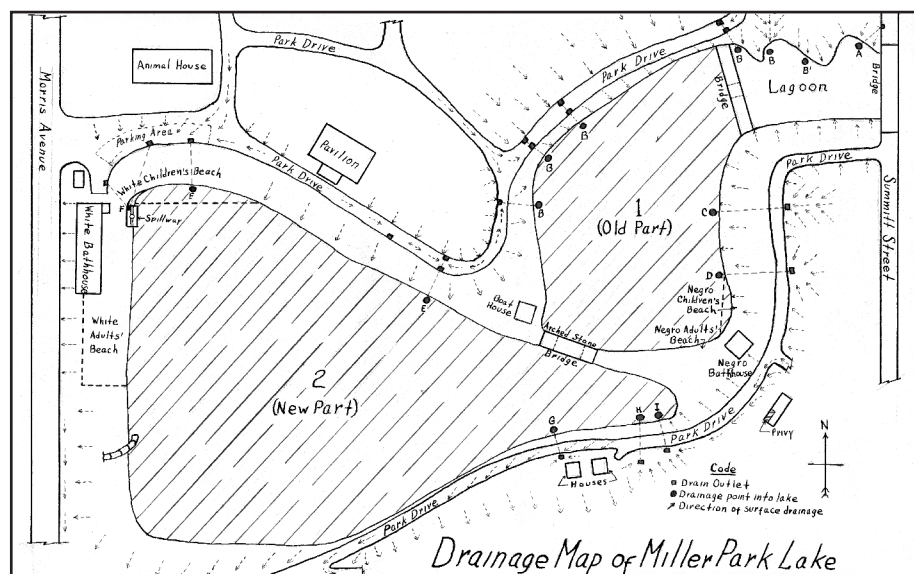
One glaring example of inequality was at Bloomington's Miller Park. Swimmers at the segregated black beach could not use the bathhouse and equipment that was available to swimmers at the white beach. Public pools were also off-limits to them.



In 1950 any sand on the black beach (above) had mostly disappeared beneath a deep layer of run-off silt. The black bathhouse had neither toilets or running water. Drainage tiles from an area to the east, where a horse barn and an outhouse were located, entered the lake just north of this beach. The white beach (right) was much larger and had a brick bottom covered with a thick layer of sand. Fresh city water was pumped into the lake along the north side of this beach during the swimming season. The white beach also had a large brick bathhouse with running water and toilets. The 1950 map of Miller Park Lake (below) shows the locations of the black and white beaches.



Images and map from Morrison, A Sanitary Survey of Miller Park and Lake Bloomington, Illinois, 1950



We couldn't swim in the nice part of the lake where the others—you know, the white people swam. We had to swim in this little area. I called it a mud hole. And we were "allowed" to use that. Of course, my mother wouldn't allow any of us to use it. Therefore, I never did learn how to swim.

Julia Cisco

Housing **discrimination** was another frequent difficulty for African American citizens. Buyers could sometimes purchase property from other Blacks, who had purchased the land in earlier times when the market was more open. Renters faced evasions and outright lies.

Nobody would want to rent to us. They would always tell us, "I would rent it to you, but the neighbors would complain."
Ruth Waddell

In theaters, restaurants and other public venues frequented by white clientele, Blacks were typically segregated or not served at all. Despite an Illinois law stating that "all people are to be served in public eating houses without discrimination," as late as the mid-1950s few local restaurants served African Americans at regular tables. Owners got around the law by ignoring black patrons, charging them double, or posting signs stating, "We reserve the right to seat our patrons."

You could work there, you could cook there, you could wash dishes; but if you wanted to eat, then you had to go to the alley.

Barbara Waddell



The Majestic Theater on East Washington Street, like all other theaters in town, segregated its audiences.

They had vaudeville at the Majestic . . . but only one section that you could stay in. Or you stood up.

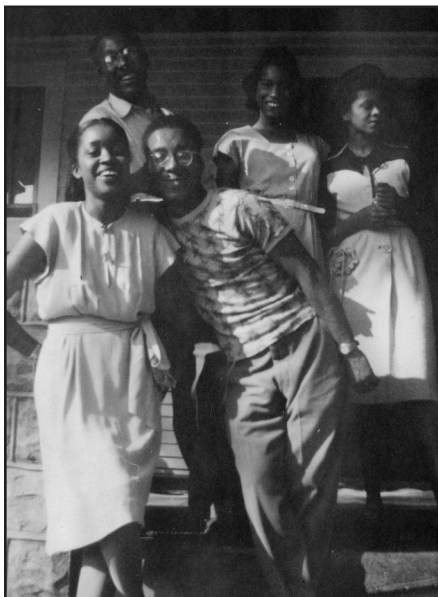
Marquerite Jackson

Black students from out of town could attend Illinois State Normal University only if they obtained off-campus housing. In the 1930s and 1940s Lue Anna Sanders Clark was one of a very few who provided housing for black students who would otherwise not been able to attend college.



Lue Anna Sanders Clark, former owner of the Workingmen's Club, boarded students attending Illinois State Normal University (ISNU) in the 1930s and 1940s because they were denied campus housing. She enabled them to earn degrees and improve their career choices. Four boarders, Drs. Riffin, Young, Calvin and DeBois, all established medical practices in large cities as a result of their education and the housing provided by Mrs. Clark.

Discrimination in student housing also occurred off campus into the 1950s. In 1956, shortly after he was hired as ISNU campus minister, Reverend Jim Pruyne discovered



Women students boarded and gathered with friends at the home of Filmore and Anna Headley.

that of the 295 white families that housed students, his was the only one that would house black students. The student housing situation had improved by the 1960s. The Dean, Thomas, Green, Headley and Simon families were among the many in Normal who provided off-campus housing for black students.

Once they overcame the barriers to earning degrees, many African American graduates of ISNU had to leave the community to find teaching positions. Even though area schools were integrated, black teachers were not hired in McLean County until the early 1960s. Area graduates were more likely to find jobs at all-black schools in large cities, or out of state. The exodus of these and other professionals slowed the growth of the black middle class in McLean County.



Wilbur Barton, ISNU Class of 1936, found work at Mt. Vernon, Indiana, and Indianapolis, Indiana.



Sherman Dabney, ISNU class of 1946, found work in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



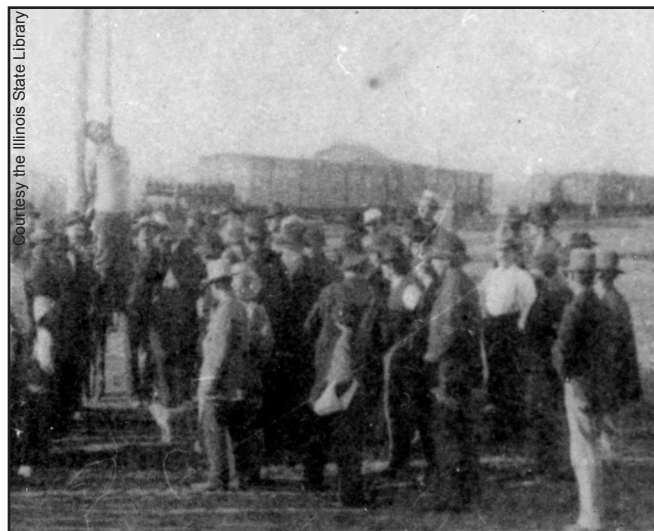
Ruth Middleton, ISNU class of 1932, found work in Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Betty Calimese, ISNU class of 1944, found work in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Racial Violence in the Land of Lincoln

Illinois was not immune to expressions of racial hatred. Just 60 miles south of Bloomington, racial troubles generated a devastating series of events. A violent race riot in Springfield, Illinois during the summer of 1908 resulted in the deaths of two black residents and the destruction of over 40 homes and 24 black-owned businesses. The trouble began when two black men were accused of crimes against whites; the murder of a man and the rape of a woman. Springfield's sheriff, Charles Werner, feared for the lives of the accused as a crowd gathered outside the



The Springfield, Illinois lynchings and the destruction of black businesses caused great fear.

jail. He spirited them out of the jail and local restaurant owner Harry Loper aided their departure to safety in Bloomington. In retaliation, the mob destroyed Loper's restaurant, sparking two days of lynchings, arson and rioting.

Because of this horrible event, a small group of concerned citizens met in New York in early 1909 to discuss how to "revive the spirit of the abolitionists." After that initial gathering, additional public meetings, and two conferences, the group publicized their intent, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was born. The organization's mission is: "To ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination."

The presence of the **Ku Klux Klan** (KKK) aroused fear in the African Americans of the county, especially those from the South who had seen the horrific practices of the southern KKK. The early 1920s saw a short period of intensive Ku Klux Klan recruiting, meetings, and gatherings in parts of McLean County. The local Klan used activities such as cross burnings, to intimidate local Blacks, Hungarians, Catholics, and Jews.

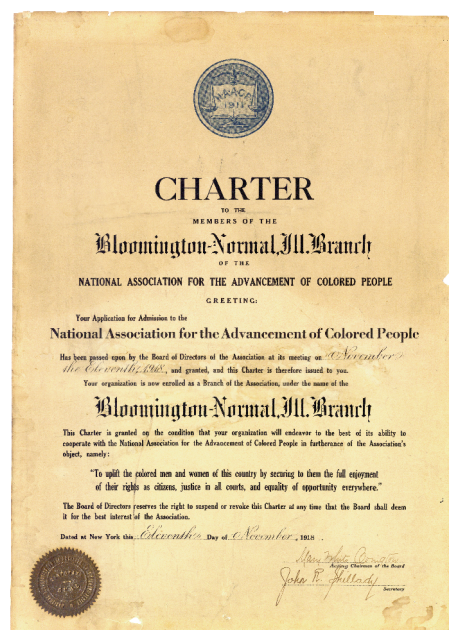


out and watch the Klan [on a farm east of Normal]. They'd march around in their uniforms. [A neighbor of ours] was one of them. He wouldn't admit it. My mother brought his kids into the world. Another fella had a horse. The horse knew us. It was close enough to pet. But the rider, whom we knew, wouldn't admit his identity. He kept his hood on.

Willbur Barton

NAACP Activities

Bloomington's branch of the NAACP organized in 1918 with sixty-six members. The group protested segregation practices and petitioned local government for greater representation of Blacks on the police force and fire department. McLean County's first NAACP protest took place in the summer of 1919 when an unsuccessful attempt was made to integrate swimming at Miller Park.



1918 Charter for the Bloomington-Normal NAACP

The political, economic and social climate for Blacks slowly began to improve during World War II and in the following decade. Men coming back from military service were often among those who had a fresh perspective about their rights and a sense of what was due them.

My brother, William, who was in the Navy . . . came home on leave, and [Bloomington's] Kresge's had the counter and the restaurant. He went over and sat down, and he said, "I will not leave; I will be served here today. I have been all over on a ship, rocking, eating rotten food and stale bread, and then you tell me I can't eat here." . . . finally [the manager] said, "Just serve him to get rid of him."

Barbara Waddell

During the war Blacks were able to obtain jobs as clerks, factory workers, nurses, and other positions from which they had previously been excluded. Local companies with military contracts, including Bloomington's Eureka-Williams, began to hire some black workers. Black employees at Eureka-Williams were segregated within the plant, allowed to work only for the duration of the federal contract, then dismissed.



This Eureka-Williams worker was photographed receiving a war bond from the company.

General Electric began providing work for black citizens of Bloomington when the company established national hiring policies. After a great amount of perseverance with company management, Ruth Waddell became the first area African American woman employed by General Electric.



Ruth Waddell constructed components at GE.

There were instances when people would refuse to work because they weren't going to work with Blacks. I learned that the personnel man said to them, "Well, we come from New York, and we have shareholders in our company [GE], and we could not let them come into any plant and not find black workers."
Caribel Washington

Local individuals and groups began to fight against the "unwritten laws" of segregation. In April 1947, a group of Illinois State Normal University students organized a **picket** of the Pilgrim, a popular student eatery that refused to serve Blacks. Three weeks after the pickets began,

restaurant management, along with ISNU administration and the student council, met with the picketers and agreed to open its doors to all people the following semester.

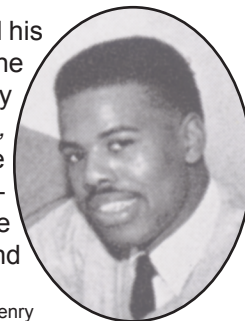


Students strike in front of the Pilgrim restaurant.

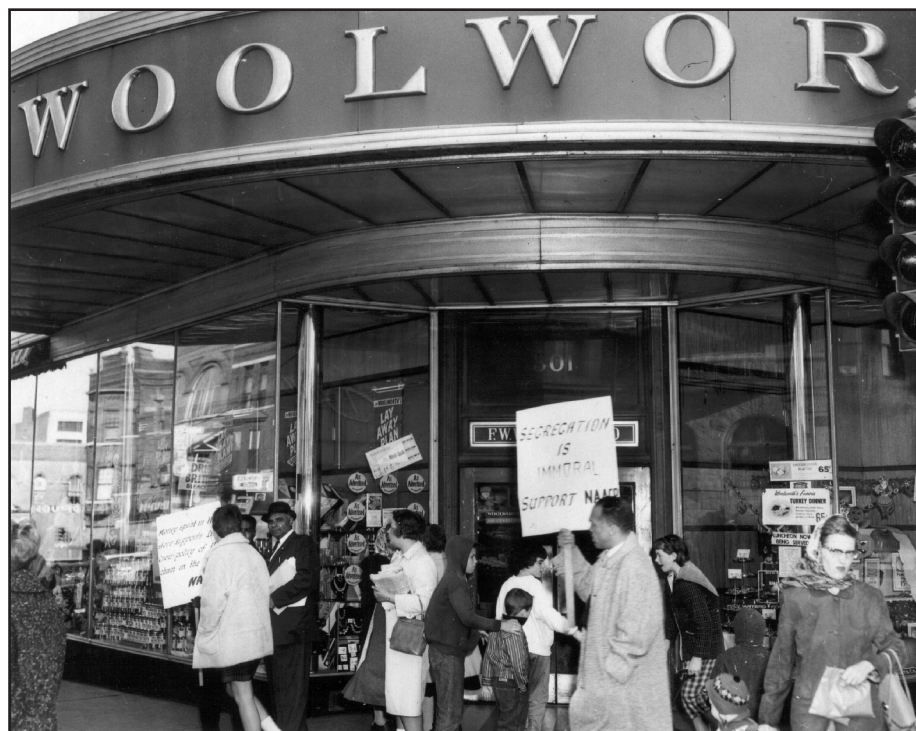
A restaurant on the fringe of the campus which has racial discrimination policies is a reflection on the University. Sorry as we are to see them go out of business, we would rather have them do so than to enforce this policy.

Charles McCoy, student picketer

In the spring of 1957, ISNU student Donald McHenry and his friends organized a campus chapter of the NAACP. The chapter began crusading for restaurant desegregation by entering an eatery and stating, "If you don't serve us, we'll sue you." Over the course of several weeks, the group convinced many eating establishments to desegregate. In the early 1960s, the university chapter of the NAACP was still testing the restaurant situation and opposing segregated barbershops.



Donald McHenry



When the state convention of the NAACP met in Bloomington in October 1960, a cordial but energizing picketing took place at Bloomington's Woolworth's.

Members of the local NAACP chapter struggled for months before deciding to join a nationwide picket of retail chains, including Woolworth's variety store

and Sears department store, whose southern stores still refused service to Blacks at their lunch counters. The local Woolworth's was already integrated, which caused one member to respond . . .

Why cut off our nose to spite our face? I eat lunch there everyday. I don't want to eat a cold sack lunch.

Unidentified NAACP member

Under the leadership of Merlin Kennedy, Bloomington's NAACP undertook protests against segregated barbershops, and participated in sympathy marches for civil rights workers in Birmingham, Alabama. They organized opposition to segregated American Legion posts and fought racial stereotypes. The organization also began holding "job conferences" with Bloomington firms to encourage the employment of Blacks.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Blacks and Whites worked together to oppose discrimination. The YWCA board decided they would try to break down the race barrier at local restaurants. Their tactic was to have a group of white people go out to eat in restaurants with just one black person. Often this person was Caribel Washington.

As long as one black person went along with any group of [white] people, they would be served.

Caribel Washington



In 1961 Luvada Hunter, president of a local group called Church Women United, spearheaded the project Freedom of Residence. The organization canvassed neighborhoods asking white residents to sign a card agreeing to let Blacks reside in their neighborhood.

The majority said they would [sign] as long as [Blacks] would act properly, just like anyone else.

Luvada Hunter

Members of the civil rights group US tried another method to eliminate housing discrimination. White members Ralph and Ellen Smith would pretend to be interested in moving into a rental property. If it was available, a black couple would then try to rent the property.

We used that [US] group . . . to do some of the things that we couldn't do under the banner of the NAACP. We could operate more freely . . . to bring exposure to the subject which was at hand. If they refused [to rent to Blacks], then we would institute a complaint against these people.

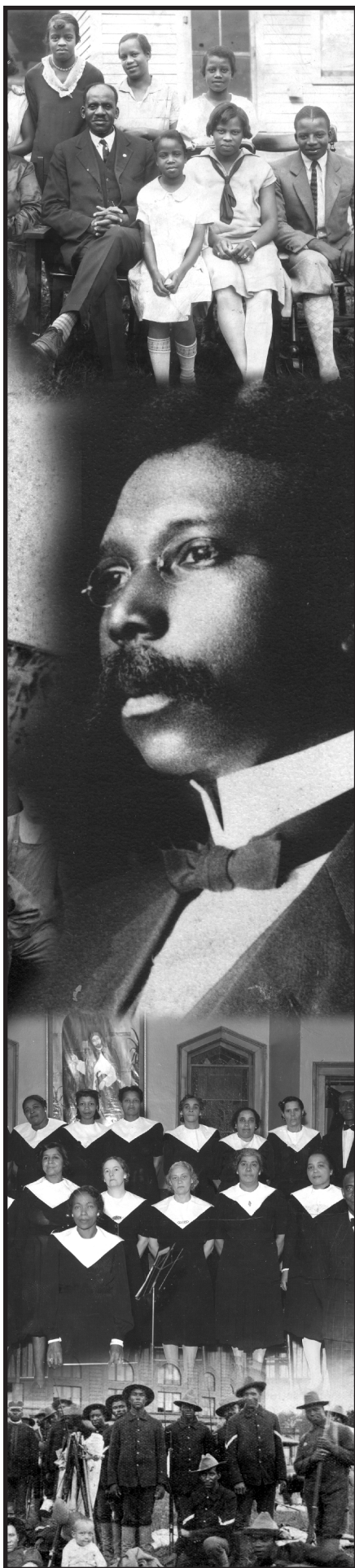
Merlin Kennedy



One memorable event in local civil rights activity put the national spotlight on the community. In 1966 the Bloomington-Normal NAACP used their Christmas parade float to challenge the notion that Santa Claus must be white. Merlin Kennedy was featured as a black Santa Claus. Local police barred the float from the parade, and the story earned nationwide coverage.



Merlin Kennedy walked along the parade route after the NAACP's 1966 float was barred from the Bloomington Christmas parade because it featured him dressed as a black Santa Claus.



PASSION

For Expression & Celebration

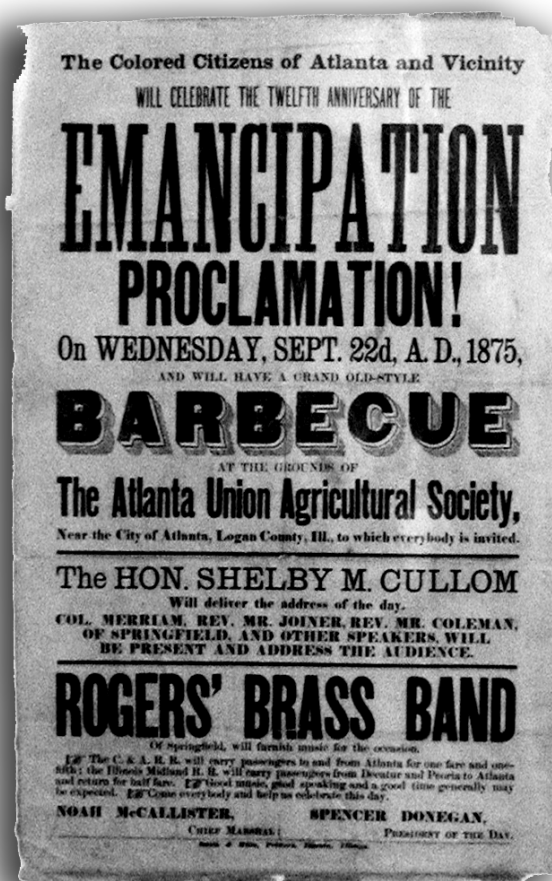
The heart and soul of the African American community is revealed through their celebrations and artistic expression. Clothing, jewelry, hairstyles, and the recognition of artists, writers, performers, as well as the celebration of significant events, have allowed black citizens to shape their own sense of American history — a process that continues with each generation.

Celebrating Freedom

McLean County's small pre-Civil War black community, with the church as its focal point, began to hold annual celebrations of the **abolition** of slavery in various parts of the world. Such events took place as early as 1859 with the commemoration of the 1833 **emancipation** of West India. After the Civil War, emancipation celebrations were held on September 22, the anniversary of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Hundreds of people attended the 1875 observance held in Atlanta, Illinois.

Celebrating Identity

Local appearances by nationally recognized African American artists, writers, scholars, and performers allowed area black residents to reflect upon and identify with the success of notable individuals. In 1880, the Fisk Jubilee Singers performed in Bloomington. The group popularized Negro spirituals with concerts for both white and black audiences in the United States and in Europe in the late 1800s.

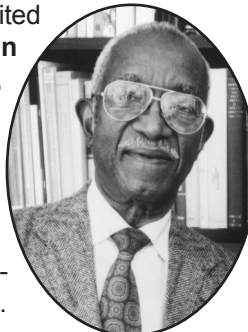


Courtesy the Atlanta Public Library and the family of Alice Merriam Bevan Adams



Martin Luther King Junior speaks to a group of Bloomington professionals on the campus of Illinois Wesleyan University.

In the fall of 1945, the Bloomington-Normal NAACP invited acclaimed poet, novelist and playwright **Langston Hughes** to speak in Bloomington-Normal. Clergyman, activist, and civil rights leader, **Martin Luther King, Jr.** spoke on the campus of IWU in 1961 and again in 1966. **John Hope Franklin**, one of the foremost historians of the American South, spoke at the annual meeting of the Abraham Lincoln Society of Springfield in Bloomington. Franklin also served as a speaker and consultant for the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project.



John Hope Franklin

African culture, including traditional African clothing and jewelry, is also important to McLean County Blacks as they celebrate individual and community accomplishments.

This typical costume of Sierra Leone is worn by Mildred Pratt to celebrate her husband's heritage.
Courtesy Mildred Pratt

"Black is Beautiful" button, c. 1973

In the 1960s and 1970s, a renewed sense of identity was forged among African Americans across the United States and in McLean County.

**BLACK
IS
BEAUTIFUL,
BABY**



Black residents, such as IWU students David Wilkins, Lois Bright, Gordon McClure and Georgia Harris, displayed pride in their heritage by rejecting the practice of straightening their hair to "look white." Instead they wore "Afros" and sported buttons reading "Black is Beautiful."



Festivals focused on African American culture have become annual area events. One national event, **Kwanzaa**, is an African American cultural holiday started in 1968. It is regularly celebrated in churches, educational institutions, social organizations, and most importantly, by families. The 2003 celebration on Illinois Wesleyan's campus featured dancers and musicians.



Kwanzaa celebration on the campus of Illinois Wesleyan University

Illinois Wesleyan University has hosted the Holiday Gospel Festival in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday since 1991.

Celebrating Contributions

Outstanding African Americans in our community have been recognized for their contributions by local and national organizations. Their life experiences often prompted them to become leaders in affairs affecting African Americans, such as the local NAACP chapter, local politics, human and civil rights organizations, and churches.

The National Black Sisters Conference awarded Sister Antona Ebo the 1989 Harriet Tubman Award for her civil rights leadership. Sister Ebo was the featured speaker at the Bloomington and Normal Human Relations Commission's 18th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Awards Program in 1994, and in March of 2005 she was featured in the Library of Congress exhibit *Voices of Civil Rights*.



Sister Antona (Betty) Ebo was the first African American to graduate from Trinity (Central Catholic) High School in Bloomington. She was denied admission to St. Joseph's School of Nursing in Bloomington because of her race. Instead, she attended a segregated nursing school in St. Louis and went on to become one of the first black nuns for the Franciscan Sisters of St. Mary, (though she had to attend a segregated novitiate school to do so). She and a few other sisters from her convent were invited to attend the "Right to Vote Bridge Crossing" at Selma, Alabama with Dr. King and thousands of other protesters. She addressed the crowd during the march, stating, *"I am here because I am a Negro, a nun, a Catholic, and because I want to bear witness. I am here today because yesterday I voted in St. Louis."*



Caribel Washington

Caribel Washington received the WJBC Spirit of McLean County Award in 1984 and the 1992 Light of Unity Award from the Baha'i of Bloomington for her efforts to promote racial harmony and community understanding. Washington's work also earned her the 1999 Studs Terkel Humanities Service Award

from the Illinois Humanities Council. Washington began researching and writing about the Bloomington-Normal African American community in the 1950s. Her work led to the founding of the **Bloomington-Normal Black History Project**. The project's mission is to preserve and promote African-American history in Bloomington-Normal through programs, speakers, archaeology digs, oral histories, and the preservation of family artifacts.

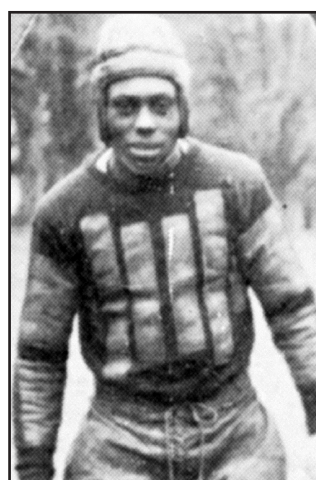
Athletic Achievements

Competitive individual and team sports have traditionally offered a venue for African Americans to demonstrate talents and earn honors. In spite of the limitations of discrimination at different points in time, McLean County has produced many outstanding black athletes. As players and coaches in baseball, basketball, football, boxing, track and volleyball, and in high school, college, professional and Olympic athletic levels, McLean County African Americans have proven their commitment to health, fitness and excellence.



George Green (left middle row) and his 1897 ISNU baseball team.

In 1897, a time when baseball was becoming increasingly segregated, Illinois State Normal University hired George Green to coach its all-white baseball team.



Dick Tate

Cooksville athlete Dick Tate excelled in both football and baseball. As ISNU's football captain, he was noted for his open field running. He used baseball talents to improve the record of many teams, including Gilkerson's Union Giants (a barnstorming professional black team that played in the upper Midwest and in Canada), and area teams such as Cheap Charlie's.



Sherman Barton

Sherman Barton was a standout baseball player in the early 1900s. He attracted the attention of John McGraw, legendary manager of the New York Giants. McGraw could not hire African Americans, so he reportedly attempted to hire Barton for his team by claiming he was Native American.



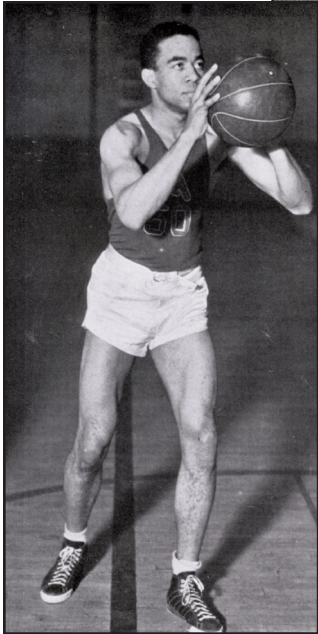
Roy Williams

In 1905, Normal Community High School graduate Roy Williams became ISNU's first black football player.

Brothers Joe and Jesse Ward led the Bellflower High School basketball team to the county championship in 1914. Joe went on to become ISNU's first black basketball player in 1920.



Joe and Jesse Ward

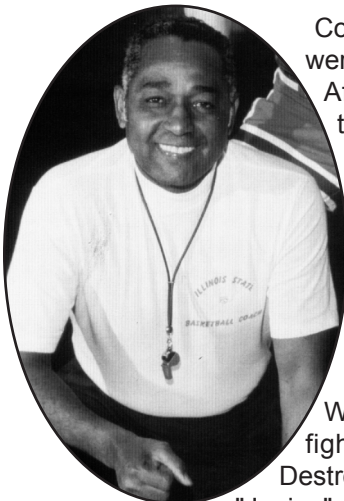


Wilbur "the Deacon" Barton

University High School standout Wilbur Barton also earned praise as a player on ISNU's basketball team, and was the captain for 1935-36.

['Barton's'] speedy footwork and deadeye for the basket have gained him an enviable reputation.
ISNU Yearbook

Walker Duff, of Normal Community High School, was the 1907 state champion in track for the 220-yard low hurdles, with a time of 26.4 seconds. He held that record until the 1920s when the event was discontinued.



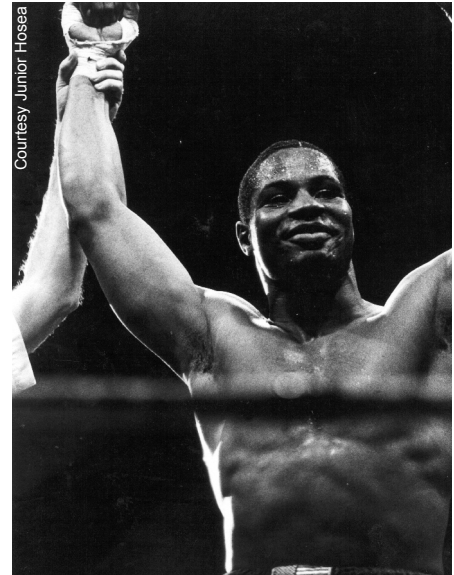
Will Robinson

Coaching opportunities were slow to open up for African Americans at the college level. Will Robinson became the nation's first black head basketball coach at a major university when ISU hired him in 1970. While at ISU, he had five winning seasons and finished with a 78-51 record.

During the 1980s, Bloomington heavyweight boxer William Hosea fought to a 17-4 record. These fights included fifteen knockouts. Called "The Destroyer" in the ring, but better known at home as "Junior," Hosea retired from boxing after losing to Mike



Walker Duff



William "The Destroyer" Hosea celebrates a win against Larry Sims.

Tyson. Tyson became the Heavyweight Champion of the World just five fights later.



Oganna Nnamani

In 1999 and 2000, Oganna Nnamani led University High School to the Illinois High School Association's state volleyball championship. She became a member of the U.S. Olympic volleyball team in 2004 and 2008. Nnamani was declared American Volleyball Coaches Association All-American four times as a member of Stanford University's women's team, and in 2004 she was named the AVCA Division 1 Co-National Player of the Year.

Artistic Achievements

The talents and creativity of the black community are illustrated through the achievements of its artists.

Gospel music has long been an important form of artistic expression for African Americans. This combination of traditional religious Spirituals and the sound of urban Blues articulates the religious journeys of black Christians. Groups such as Bloomington's Melody Gospel Choir showcased their vocal talents across the region. Under the direction of Hazel and Frank Harber, the Melody Gospel Choir performed from 1934 until about 1970. The popular group performed on radio station WJBC, broadcasting from the studio above the Castle Theater in downtown Bloomington, and traveled widely in Illinois.

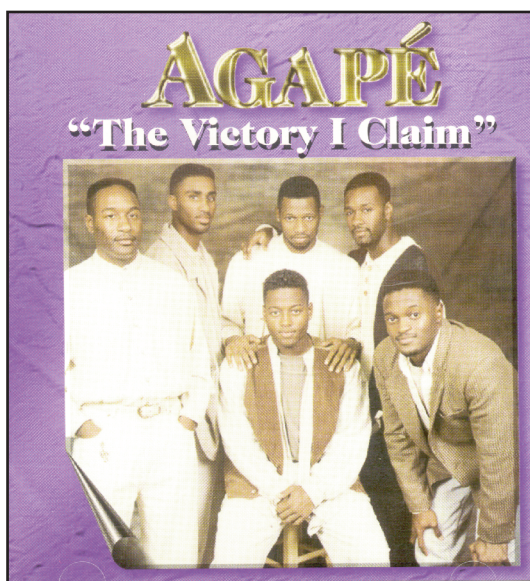
Jazz trumpet player Orlando Dyer performed with popular jazz bands across the Midwest and was the first trumpeter in Jimmy Raschel's band in the 1930s.



Orlando Dyer



The Melody Gospel Choir



Gospel music's timeless appeal garnered new fans with the talented male acappella group Agapé. They performed Gospel across Illinois in the 1990s. Their recordings included live performances at Bloomington's Mount Pisgah Baptist Church. Its members were Damon Beverly, Keith Robertson, Larry Colmen Jr., Adrian Robinson, Anthony Helm, and Ferell Robinson Jr. Bloomington's Frank McSwain Jr. was a featured percussionist on their "The Victory I Claim" CD.

Cover image from Agapé's CD "The Victory I Claim"

Dancer Jonathan Alsberry was a regular performer with the Twin City Ballet Company before moving to New York to study at the Julliard Conservatory. Alsberry has been featured with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet and is currently a member of the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company.



Jonathan Alsberry (center front) performs with the Chicago Academy.

International Recognition

Singer and actor Jack Waddell was among those who established international careers. With his powerful bass-baritone voice, he defied the odds for success as an opera singer by moving to West Germany in the late 1960s. Today he makes his home in New York City and still performs classical and popular music. He is also in demand as a vocal coach for young Broadway performers. Waddell is a Bloomington native and 1963 graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University.



Bass-Baritone singer Jack Waddell

Music

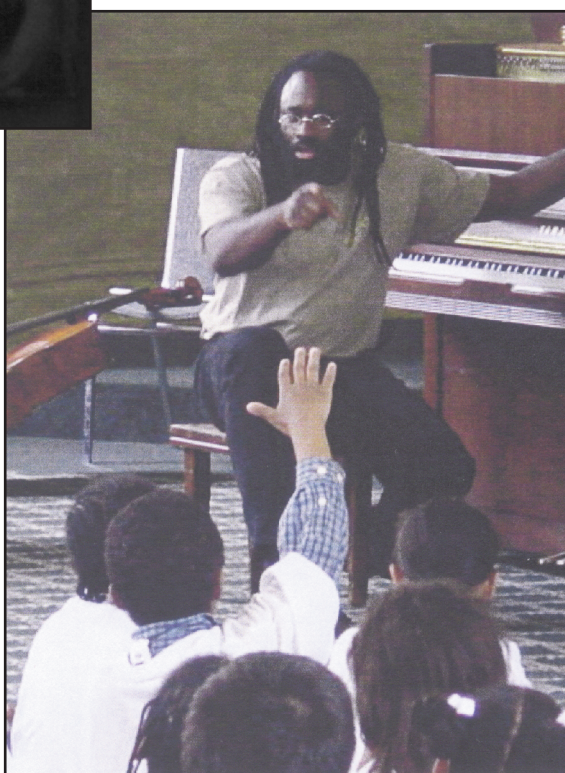
Pratt: A Piano Powerhouse

By Joseph McLellan
Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington was introduced to a major new musical talent, pianist Awadagin Pratt, last night at the National Academy of Sciences. Inaugurating the Library of Congress's new Carolyn Royall Just concert series (endowed by a bequest from a Washington attorney who was an ardent chamber musician), Pratt joined the Mendelssohn String Quartet in a many-faceted program.

The evening opened with the Mendelssohn (violinists Nick Eanet and Nicholas Mann, violist Katherine Murdock and cellist Marcy Rosen) giving a polished and well-balanced performance of Mozart's Quartet in D, K. 499. It ended with Pratt joining the

Classical pianist Awadagin Pratt has earned both national and international acclaim, and encourages young performers through music programs and scholarships. In 1992 he became the first African American classical instrumentalist ever to win first prize in an international competition — the prestigious Naumburg International Piano Competition. Raised in Normal, Pratt is assistant professor of piano and artist-in-residence at the College Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati. Pratt continues to perform internationally and regularly hosts *Next Generation* classes to promote music education for youths. He also performs benefit concerts for the Pratt Music Foundation, a local organization that provides scholarships for music lessons to talented area youths who would otherwise not be able to afford them.



Awadagin Pratt teaches a *Next Generation* class.

Reviews of Pratt's piano performances, such as this May 15, 1993 *Washington Post* review, gave him high praise.

Conclusion

It is fitting that this narrative ends on a musical note. The song of freedom has been heard in the hearts of African Americans in McLean County for a very long time. They have worked side by side with others in the community to make the dream of equality a reality. Harmony and grace, along with courage and hard work, have helped each generation experience a better quality of life. With gratitude, we honor and acknowledge the contributions of those who have given us this rich heritage and paved the way to the future.

GLOSSARY

Abolition, abolitionist - In the case of slavery, abolitionism was the struggle to end the slavery of African Americans and an abolitionist is a person who worked in that effort.

African Methodist Episcopal - Organized by African Americans in the late eighteenth century and using the structure of the Episcopal Church, this Methodist-based church group is now composed of over two million members.

Black Codes - in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, laws created to control or inhibit the freedom of African Americans.

Bloomington-Normal Black History Project - In partnership with the McLean County Historical Society, the BNBHP collects materials, holds workshops, sponsors archaeological digs (including one at a Tennessee plantation where the slave ancestor of a Bloomington man had lived), features concerts by black performers, presents scholarships to encourage student research, and offers ongoing aid to persons seeking to study the African American past.

Certificate of freedom - A document filed with the local authorities declaring that an African American is no longer a slave, either by buying or being granted freedom from an owner.

Desegregation - To eliminate racial segregation or to allow previously separated racial, religious or other groups to come together into the general body of society.

Discrimination - In this context, to make a distinction in favor or against a person based on race without considering abilities or skills.

Douglass, Frederick (1817-1895) - An escaped slave, Douglass educated himself and began speaking on the abolition of slavery, becoming one of the best known black orators in the country.

Dunbar, Paul Laurence (1872-1906) - The son of an ex-slave, Paul Laurence Dunbar was the first African American to gain national recognition as a poet.

Emancipation Proclamation - President Lincoln issued this proclamation on January 1, 1863, freeing the slaves in those territories still in rebellion against the Union (the Confederacy). The proclamation symbolically declared all enslaved people "free," but freedom was not fully realized until the 13th amendment was passed in 1865.

Entrepreneur - A person who organizes and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk.

Franklin, John Hope (1915-2009) - This United States historian was president of the American Historical Association and professor emeritus of history at Duke University. He is best known for his work *From Slavery to Freedom*, first published in 1947, and continuously updated. In the early 1950s, Franklin served on the NAACP Legal Defense team led by Thurgood Marshall that helped develop the case that led to the 1954 United States Supreme Court decision ending the legal segregation of black and white children in public schools.

Free State - A state that joined the Union, before the Civil War, that did not allow slavery within its boundaries.

Hughes, Langston (1902 - 1967) - This African American poet, novelist, playwright, short story writer, and newspaper columnist was best known for his work during the Harlem Renaissance. He lived in Lincoln, IL during a portion of his childhood and had friendships with Central Illinois poets Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg.

Indenture - A contract between a worker and an employer stating that the worker must serve for a period of years to pay off a debt to the employer. In this case, the indentures could last 20 years or more.

Integration - To combine anything separated by race into one unified system, such as religion, gender, jobs, schools and access to services.

Jim Crow - A practice or policy of segregating or discriminating against African Americans, as in public places, public vehicles, employment, etc. The term is based on a song sung by Thomas "Daddy" Rice (1808-1860) in a Negro minstrel show that portrayed Blacks as inferior and silly.

King, Jr., Dr. Martin Luther (1929 - 1968) King was an American political activist, the most famous leader of the American Civil Rights Movement, and a Baptist minister. Considered a peacemaker throughout the world for his promotion of nonviolence and equal treatment for different races, he received the Nobel Peace Prize before he was assassinated in 1968.

Ku Klux Klan - This group (also referred to as the KKK) is one of several past and present fraternal organizations in the United States that have advocated white supremacy, anti-Semitism, racism, anti-Catholicism, homophobia, and nativism. These organizations have often used terrorism, violence and acts of intimidation such as cross burning to oppress African Americans and others.

Kwanzaa - Maulana (Ron) Karenga created Kwanzaa in California in 1966, during his leadership of the black nationalist Us Organization to give African Americans an alternative holiday to Christmas. He later stated, "... it was chosen to give a Black alternative to the existing holiday and give Blacks an opportunity to celebrate themselves and history, rather than simply imitate the practice of the dominant society."

Liberia - A colony in Africa founded by the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America in 1817. The Society's purpose was to rid the United States of free Blacks and former slaves, because it was believed they could never assimilate into White society. By 1847, the colony became an independent republic, and by 1867, over 13,000 people had been sent by the Society to this newly created country.

Lovejoy, Owen (1818-1864)- Lovejoy was an American lawyer, Congregational minister, abolitionist, and Republican congressman. He was also a "conductor" on the underground railroad. His brother, Elijah Lovejoy, was murdered defending his anti-slavery newspaper. Carl Sandburg wrote in 1854 that Lovejoy swore on his brother's grave to *"never forsake the cause that had been sprinkled with my brother's blood."*

Lynching - To hang, burn, or otherwise kill a person by mob action and without legal authority for some perceived crime. In the case of racism, the perceived crime is a person's racial background rather than any overt wrong action.

NAACP - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, an organization formed in 1909 to promote civil rights for African Americans and all people of color.

Picket(ing) - Marching or standing in front of a business or organization whose policies are considered immoral is a form of protest or resistance against such policies. Pickets cause negative publicity and loss of customers, which puts pressure on the business to change its policies.

Segregation - To require, often with force, the separation of a specific racial, religious or other group from the general body of society.

Three-fifths Clause - This portion of the 1787 Constitutional Convention stated slaves could be counted as three-fifths of a whole person when counting population for tax purposes and establishing the number of congressmen each state could have in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Triangular Trade - Trade ships in the seventeenth century sailed this route carrying raw materials from North America to Europe, then taking the European manufactured goods to African nations and exchanging them for slaves to be taken to North America.

Underground Railroad - This euphemism described the arrangement among opponents of slavery using a system of hiding places in private homes of abolitionists to help runaway slaves escape to freedom in Canada or other places of safety.

Upland Southerner - Those from a region of the Upper South that includes West Virginia, and the Appalachian Mountain areas of North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

Washington, Booker T. (1856-1915) - A former slave, Washington became a U.S.reformer, educator, author and lecturer. He strove to improve the education of black people throughout the South, and was prominent in black politics. He advocated for cooperation with the white establishment to raise the status of African Americans in the country, but this philosophy was seen as too accommodating to some activists who preferred a more militant approach to the Civil Rights struggle.

Choices Activity

The following scenarios are based on real incidents that happened in McLean County. Read the scenario then discuss the question, "What would you do if placed in the same situation?" Turn to page 39 to see what actually happened.

Scenario 1: You are a white man who owns a farm in McLean County in 1844. You want to sell your farm. A buyer comes to you and offers to pay for the farm with a slave he owns. Slavery is illegal but still practiced in Illinois.

What would you do? Accept the offer and trade your farm for the slave.
 Refuse the offer and try to find another buyer.
 Accept the offer and free the slave.

Scenario 2: You are a white man at home in 1858. A black woman is gathering scraps of lumber in your yard. You didn't give her permission to be there, and it's your property.

What would you do? Tell her to leave and find wood somewhere else.
 Tell her that she can have the wood, but next time, ask before she comes on your property.
 Yell and throw things at her to make her leave.

Scenario 3: You are a white woman living in Mt. Hope (southeast of McLean, Illinois) in 1848. You have been hiding runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad. Slave-catchers come to your house and demand to know about two slaves you helped.

What would you do? Lie and say you don't know anything about it.
 Tell them some information, but not everything.
 Answer their questions truthfully.

Scenario 4: You are a white member of Bloomington's Presbyterian Church in 1853. Your minister has been preaching pro-slavery sermons on Sundays. Some in the congregation are offended and talk about starting an anti-slavery church.

What would you do? Join them in starting another church.
 Stay at your church and let them start another.
 Try to convince them that slavery has divided so many people that churches should stay together.

Scenario 5: You are a black man living in Bloomington in 1863. The government has finally allowed black men to enlist in segregated units in the Civil War. A local man is organizing a regiment of black soldiers.

What would you do? Enlist in the regiment to fight for the Union.
 Decide not to be a soldier at all.
 Refuse because you can't join with white soldiers.

Scenario 6: You are a black farmer living in southern Illinois in 1882. The Mississippi River is flooding your nearby farm. This year is especially bad, but flooding is a usual occurrence that kills livestock and crops every year.

What would you do? Wait out the flood and try to salvage your farm.
 Wait out the flood and then move somewhere else.
 Collect what you can and leave now.

Scenario 7: You are a white registered voter living in Normal in 1867. A black girl has been accepted for admission to ISNU, and the town is taking a vote on whether or not to integrate the school.

What would you do? Vote to integrate black and white students.
 Vote for a separate school for black students.
 Vote to refuse black students admission to school.

Scenario 8: Its 1871. You are a white McLean County judge. You hold hearings to decide if black children should be allowed to attend school with white children or have separate schools. There is a separate building and teacher for black students now, but black parents want their children in the same schools as white children.

What would you do? Rule that blacks can't attend public school at all.
 Rule that separate schools are too expensive.
 Rule that two separate schools are adequate for two races.

Scenario 9: You are on Illinois State Normal University's Board of Control in 1897. You need to appoint a new coach for the baseball team. There are a couple of candidates, and one has a lot of experience; however, he's black.

What would you do? Appoint a less-experienced white coach.
Appoint the experienced black coach.
Keep looking for a better-qualified white candidate.

Scenario 10: You are a black tenant farmer in Kentucky. You rent your land from a landlord and share equipment with other farm families. This year you can't pay your rent because you don't have enough crops to sell. You've heard there are jobs in Bloomington, but they don't pay much.

What would you do? Continue farming and hope next year's harvest is better.
Sell some belongings to make rent money.
Move and hope you get a job that pays better.

Scenario 11: You are a black soldier fighting the Spanish-American War in Cuba. Your regiment is all-black. A friend wrote to you and asked if what he heard was true, that black soldiers are not doing their duty.

What would you do? Write him back but ignore his question.
Assure him that your troops are doing their best.
Tell him that you're insulted that he asked.

Scenario 12: You are a black woman living in Normal in 1938. A friend asks you to go to the movies with her. You know that since you're black, you can only sit in the balcony of the theater.

What would you do? Accept her invitation and sit in the black section
Refuse to go where you can't sit where you want.
Go, but complain when the usher asks you to sit in certain seats.

Scenario 13: Its 1905. You are a black mother living in Tupelo, Mississippi. Your son and daughter come home carrying the lunch you sent them to bring their father. They tell you a white boy stopped them on their way and urinated on the lunch.

What would you do? Tell them it's not their fault and make extra food for your husband's dinner
Go to the boy's house and yell at his parents.
Find the boy to punish him for his actions.

Scenario 14: You are a white man living in Bloomington in 1911. You once employed a black man who you believe is a fine, upstanding citizen. Recently, some people have been spreading bad rumors about him. He asks you to help clear his name.

What would you do? Write a letter to the newspaper on the man's behalf.
Quietly tell the people spreading rumors to stop.
Tell him there's not much you can do for him.

Scenario 15: Its 1961. You are white member of Bloomington's First Christian Church. The Third Christian Church, a black church you've been helping, has to close. Some members of your church want to invite them to join First Christian, but others don't want them because they're black.

What would you do? Encourage everyone to welcome fellow Christians.
Tell your pastor you don't really want them to join, but you'll be nice if he invites them.
Sign a petition to ban black people from the church.

Scenario 16: You are a black teenager living in Normal in 1920. Your parents have low-paying jobs and want you to work to help pay bills. That means you will have to drop out of school.

What would you do? Drop out of school and get a job.
Stay in school and hope to get a better job later.
Try to work part-time and also go to school.

Scenario 17: Its 1910. You are a black teenager living on a farm about 30 miles from Bloomington. There are not many black families near you, and your parents don't want you to drive the buggy long distances by yourself to meet people.

What would you do? Give up hope of meeting someone to marry.
Finish chores early and convince your brother to drive you to town.
Decide to give up farm life and get a job in town.

Scenario 18: You are a black Spanish-American War veteran. You planned to go with your regiment to the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. A few weeks before the event, an Army official writes to ask if your regiment is composed of black soldiers. He says he can't provide housing or cooking supplies for black veterans, so you'll have to bring your own.

What would you do? Attend the fair with your own tents and supplies.
Write that you will only attend if supplies are provided.
Refuse to attend since you'll be treated unequally.

Scenario 19: You are a black woman living in Normal in 1917. You just graduated with a teaching degree from ISNU. The schools in Bloomington and Normal won't hire you because you're black.

What would you do? Find a non-teaching job in town.
Leave town to find a teaching job.
Sit in the superintendent's office until he hires you.

Scenario 20: You are a black soldier returning to Bloomington from fighting World War I in Europe. You go to sign up for the local American Legion Post, but they say you're not allowed because you're black.

What would you do? Live without a veteran's organization.
Look into starting a black American Legion Post.
Insist that you fought just as hard as white soldiers and deserve the same benefits.

Scenario 21: Its 1907. You are a black barber serving only white clients in Normal. A black man comes in for a haircut. If you cut black people's hair, your white customers might not come back.

What would you do? Tell him your policy of whites only.
Cut his hair just this once.
Change your policy to cut white and black hair.

Scenario 22: You are a black woman living in Bloomington in 1920. You take your daughter to swim at Miller Park beach. There is a separate black beach, but you know that it is dirty, inadequate, and not nearly as nice as the beach for white swimmers. You take your daughter to swim in the nicer section for white people. Someone calls the police.

What would you do? Leave Miller Park.
Take your daughter to the black section.
Insist that you pay taxes and your child will swim in the public lake.

Scenario 23: You are a black student at Bloomington High School in 1925. You are the best student in your typing class, and your teacher sends you to fill in at an office for a few days. When you apply for the job, the head secretary tells you to put another race on your application because she can't hire any black people.

What would you do? Write another race on your application.
Leave that part of the application blank.
Tell her you won't lie and walk out.

Scenario 24: You are a black man living in Bloomington in 1928. A Ku Klux Klan parade is marching down your street, and you recognize the shoes of one of your white friend's sons.

What would you do? Try not to hang around your friend anymore.
Talk to your friend about his son.
Take the mask off the son to expose him.

Scenario 25: You are a wealthy white person living in Bloomington in 1934. Its the middle of the Great Depression and many people are out of work. Some of your friends are firing their black servants to hire white help.

What would you do? Replace your black servants with white workers.
Keep a few black servants, and replace others with white people desperate for a job.
Keep all your employees.

Scenario 26: Its 1933. You are a black jazz musician working out of Bloomington. You've been hired to play a jazz show at a whites only club. You know some black people would like to hear you play.

What would you do? Promise them you'll play at a church social.
Play at a black club after your show.
Bring them with you to the "whites only" club.

Scenario 27: You are a black student at Illinois State Normal University, but it's 1932 and because you are black you can't live in the dormitory. The only family you can find to live with is almost 2 miles from campus and you'll have to walk home from class after dark.

What would you do? Delay going to school until you find a closer home.
Board far from campus and try to be careful.
Sit in the dorm lobby to protest the housing policy.

Scenario 28: Its 1935. You are a white teenager visiting Springfield, Illinois with some friends. You decide to go to a movie, but your black friend, in front of you in line, is told by the ticket taker that he can't come in because he's black.

What would you do? Tell him you'll see him later and watch the movie.
Leave. If he can't go, you won't either.
Demand that your friend be allowed in.

Scenario 29: You are a black basketball player in Chicago for a tournament in 1937. The hotel the team is staying in won't let you stay there because you're black.

What would you do? Try to find a family to stay with.
Tell the coach you can't go to the tournament.
Quit the basketball team.

Scenario 30: You are a white city councilman for Bloomington in 1940. The last mayor appointed a black man to feed the animals at Miller Park Zoo. The new mayor replaced him with one of his white friends. Now the animals won't eat! The mayor wants to vote on what to do.

What would you do? Vote to keep the new zookeeper.
Vote for another replacement zookeeper.
Vote to give the old zookeeper his job back.

Scenario 31: You are a parent of black teenagers. Because black people are not allowed at most restaurants in town, black teenagers have no place to go to for socializing.

What would you do? Try to help them think of ideas for things to do.
Let them hang out at your house.
Start a small restaurant where they can hang out.

Scenario 32: You are a white factory manager in Bloomington during World War II. Many of your white workers have left to fight and production and profits are down.

What would you do? Do the best you can with less workers.
Try to recruit more men to work for you.
Hire women and black people to fill in.

Scenario 33: You are a white manager of a Bloomington restaurant in 1951. A light-skinned black woman regularly eats lunch at your restaurant, but today she came in with her three children who have very dark skin. You usually only serve white customers; the woman has light enough skin to pass for white, but the kids don't.

What would you do? Tell the woman that her children can't eat there.
Offer them food to take home — if they wait behind the restaurant.
Serve the whole family since you've served the mother before.

Scenario 34: Its 1952. You are a black veteran of the Korean War and have just returned home from service in the military. You want to celebrate by going out to eat. When you arrive at the restaurant, the manager tells you they don't serve black people.

What would you do? Leave and find another restaurant.
Ask if you can order food to go.
Announce that you won't leave until you're served.

Scenario 35: You are a white restaurant manager in Bloomington. In 1955 a very famous black actor comes in to eat in your restaurant. Your policy is not to serve black people.

What would you do? Tell him the policy and refuse him service.
Offer him some food to go.
Seat him separately from the rest of your patrons.

Scenario 36: Its 1955. You are a black woman seeking employment. A factory has announced open employment -- they will hire anyone who is qualified for a job. When you go to apply, others are hired but the manager won't talk to you.

What would you do? Give up and leave.
Sit quietly and wait for them to get to you.
Keep calling and returning until they talk to you.

Scenario 37: You are a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). When the national convention for the NAACP comes to town in 1960, they want to picket a chain store that doesn't serve black people in other cities, even though its serves blacks locally.

What would you do? Stay home since the store serves you here.
Join the picket.
Ask what your friends are doing before you decide.

Scenario 38: You are the 1966 commander of black American Legion Post in Bloomington. A white veteran comes in to apply for membership in your Post. The white post has repeatedly denied black veterans membership.

What would you do? Send him to the white veteran's organization.
Ask him why he wants to join since there is a white organization.
Give him an application.

Scenario 39: You are a white student leader at Illinois Wesleyan University. You want to bring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to IWU to discuss equality for black and white people. You think you can get him to speak on campus, but at other predominantly white institutions, people have threatened Dr. King.

What would you do? Decide not to ask him to come because of the risk.
Ask him to come but don't advertise much.
Schedule a talk and let everyone know he's coming.

Scenario 40: Its 1968. You are a white Bloomington city council member. Both black and white people have complained that black people are not allowed to rent houses that white people can have. The council is going to vote to resolve the issue.

What would you do? Vote to let landlords pick their renters.
Vote for an extra application for black renters.
Vote for an open housing policy.

Scenario 41: You are a talented black music student going to University High School. You would like to be a classical pianist when you grow up, but because there are few professional black classical musicians you question the likelihood of being successful.

What would you do? Figure you'll never make it and just play for fun.
Ask your teacher to see what she thinks you should do.
Work extra hard to meet your goal even though you might fail.

Scenario 42: You are a black woman living in Bloomington. There is an opening on the city council and you would really like to participate in city government. No black person has ever served on the council, and you ran for the position a few years ago and lost.

What would you do? Decide not to run again since you lost last time.
Try half-heartedly since you're sure you won't win.
Campaign as best as you can.

Scenario 43: You are President of the United States. Its 1978 and you need a new ambassador to the United Nations. Your advisors want you to fill the position quickly and avoid a long job search. You know a well-qualified individual, but he is black and the US has never had a black ambassador before.

What would you do? Appoint the qualified black man who can start now.
Search for a white person, even if it takes longer.
Pick whomever your advisors think is best.

Choices Activity

The synopsis below explain what really happened in each of the actual McLean County events

Scenario 1: Mr. and Mrs. Preston Laughbaugh sold their farm to James Elliott for the price of Richard Conway, a slave that Elliott owned. Records do not indicate whether or not they freed him.

Scenario 2: Sidney Haley threw bricks and clubs at Charlotte Wells, a black woman gathering lumber scraps in his yard. She left, but the police arrested Haley for assaulting Wells.

Scenario 3: Mrs. Greene was questioned about two runaway slaves she had hidden, but she lied to the slave-catchers. She felt terribly guilty about lying, but she did so to prevent slaves being recaptured.

Scenario 4: Members of the Presbyterian Church, led by William Wallace, left to form the anti-slavery Second Presbyterian Church.

Scenario 5: Many black people responded to the call to arms late in the Civil War. I. R. Allen advertised for soldiers for a black regiment, and a total of 39 black men fought from McLean County.

Scenario 6: Jesse and Mary Ward farmed near Cairo, Illinois when the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers flooded. Their house became an island and they saved their horses on a raft. They waited for the waters to recede and then moved to Bellflower, Illinois.

Scenario 7: A black girl applied and was admitted to the Model School at ISNU in 1867. Despite outcry across Illinois, a local vote showed that 92 (91%) of 101 voters wanted integration, and only 2 wanted to ban black students from the university.

Scenario 8: When the black parents insisted that their children attend the public school closest to their houses, the superintendent built a shack for them. Judge Thomas F. Tipton integrated the school, ruling that it was a fraud on the taxpayers to make them pay for a separate school for a few black children.

Scenario 9: The board of ISNU appointed George Green, a black barber, to bring experience and discipline to the baseball team. ISU didn't hire another black coach for 75 years.

Scenario 10: Around 1900, many blacks emigrated from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri to find jobs that paid cash. Many found work as servants, coal miners, and cooks. These were all low-paying jobs.

Scenario 11: Capt. Julius Witherspoon wrote home from Cuba to dispel rumors about his men. He said they were in good health and completing assignments.

Scenario 12: Black moviegoers were segregated to the balcony until the late 1950s. Some people, like Alice Covington, the wife of a prominent black doctor, refused to go to movies for that reason.

Scenario 13: After a white boy urinated on the lunch she made her husband, a black woman in Mississippi slapped the boy. The white boy's parents threatened the black family with violence even though their son had urinated on a lunch the black woman made for her husband. The black family left for Bloomington that night.

Scenario 14: It was common for prominent white people to give references for black workers. In December 1911, police chief Fred Lang wrote a letter vouching for Ike Sanders, a Bloomington black man questioned by Boston police.

Scenario 15: Bloomington's First Christian Church helped Third Christian Church find pastors from 1940 to the 1960s. When Third Christian finally closed, some members joined First Christian, and others went elsewhere. Some First Christian members were not happy, but the Reverend John Trefzger convinced them to welcome fellow Christians.

Scenario 16: Many black students were not encouraged to attend high school and had to drop out of school to help their families financially. One 12-year-old girl tried to go to school while working for a white family, but didn't have time for homework.

Scenario 17: Jesse and Mary Ward raised 12 children on their farm, but only 3 of them married. Long hours and distances may have prevented the older children from meeting people.

Scenario 18: The 8th Illinois National Guard was asked to bring their own supplies to the World's Fair in St. Louis with the following letter: "Kindly inform me whether your regiment is colored...if that is the case you will see how necessary it will be to make some special arrangements for your accommodations. Would you be willing to bring your own tents and cooking outfit?" They did not attend.

Scenario 19: The few black students who graduated college couldn't find related jobs in town. Wilbur Barton moved to Indiana, and Julia Duff moved to Oklahoma to find a teaching job at a black girls' school. Her sister Alverta worked as housekeeper for the Stevenson family.

Scenario 20: Black veterans of WWI were segregated from the local American Legion Post. They started their own in honor of John Redd and Gus Williams, black soldiers who died fighting.

Scenario 21: Most local barbers were black, and many like Jerome and Napoleon Calimese had a "whites only" policy. Frank Dabney was afraid he would lose business if he changed his policy to include black people.

Scenario 22: A black woman defended her daughter's right to swim at the public beach, even when threatened by a "big Irish cop." Segregated beach and bathhouse conditions persisted into the 1960s.

Scenario 23: Lucinda Miller was a black typing student sent to fill in at the Eureka-Williams factory. She was hired, but before she left the head secretary told her to change her race on the application because she couldn't hire black people. Lucinda told her, "Well I'm a Negro," and left disappointed.

Scenario 24: During a KKK parade down Oakland Ave., a black Bloomington man pulled the mask off his friend's son and demanded to know what he was doing there.

Scenario 25: During the Depression, white workers began to work lower-paying jobs that black people had done before. Many families fired their black help and replaced them with white workers, but some, like the Beichs and Ewings, kept their black employees.

Scenario 26: Many musicians like Orlando Dryer played at "whites only" clubs earlier in the evening, and then at black clubs like the Third Ward Club late at night.

Scenario 27: Illinois State Normal University black students could not live in university dormitories, so they had to board with families in town. Walking home late at night was a regular occurrence.

Scenario 28: Wilbur Barton from Normal was denied entry into a movie theater in Springfield because he was black. His white friends left with him.

Scenario 29: Black people were not allowed in most hotels, so athletes had to find their own accommodations when traveling for games. Wilbur Barton often stayed with a black family. Other times he was put in a room that was out of the way of most hotel guests.

Scenario 30: Willie Stearles fed the animals at Miller Park Zoo for over 25 years. When he lost his patronage job, the animals went on a hunger strike, and he was given his job back.

Scenario 31: Because black people were not served at most restaurants, Luther and Lutie Anson opened "The Chat and Chew" with a jukebox and a short menu so young people had a place to go.

Scenario 32: The labor shortage created by workers enlisting prompted many factories such as Eureka-Williams to hire women and black people, like Ruth Waddell, for the first time. Earlier, they could only be janitors for these companies.

Scenario 33: Black people had to wait behind most restaurants for food to take home. One mother had light enough skin that she ate in a diner alone, but couldn't bring her dark-skinned children with her.

Scenario 34: William Hosea returned from his tour of military duty and was denied service at Kresge's restaurant. He announced, "I will not leave. I will be served here today. I have been all over on a ship rocking, eating rotten food and stale bread, and then you tell me I can't eat here!" He was served.

Scenario 35: Internationally known black singer and actor William Warfield was served at a Bloomington restaurant after they put up a screen between him and the other diners.

Scenario 36: General Electric was the first plant to offer open employment in town at the insistence of New York executives. When Ruth Waddell applied, she refused to leave the office until she was interviewed. She was hired.

Scenario 37: During the convention, members of the NAACP picketed Woolworth's because black patrons were denied service at branches in other cities.

Scenario 38: Black veterans had been turned away for membership in the white American Legion. But, when a white man, James Engelhorn, asked to apply to the black post, commander Ralph Doage gave him an application.

Scenario 39: Dr. King spoke on IWU's campus in 1961 and 1966. The second time a crowd of 3,000 came to hear him speak, but student body leader Dick Muirhead received hate mail and phone threats for bringing King to Bloomington.

Scenario 40: Black people had a hard time finding a place to live in the late 1960s. White couples were sent to test if they could rent houses refused to black families. When they could, Bloomington passed an open housing ordinance.

Scenario 41: Although black classical pianists were very few, Mr. Awadagin Pratt from Normal became the first black person to win the Naumburg International Piano Competition in 1992.

Scenario 42: Eva Jones lost the race for city council in 1970, but became the first black person to serve when she won in 1979.

Scenario 43: President Jimmy Carter appointed Donald McHenry, an ISU graduate, the first black U.N. Ambassador for the United States.



McLEAN COUNTY

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